

19

NINETEENTH  
CENTURY

VOLUME 34  
NUMBER 2

*All-British Issue*

Magazine of the Victorian Society in America

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VOLUME 34 • NUMBER 2  
*Fall 2014*

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Warren Ashworth  
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James F. O'Gorman  
Karen Zukowski

*For information on The Victorian Society in America, contact the national office:*

1636 Sansom Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19103  
(215) 636-9872  
Fax (215) 636-9873  
[info@victoriansociety.org](mailto:info@victoriansociety.org)  
[www.victoriansociety.org](http://www.victoriansociety.org)



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# All-British Issue

IN HONOR OF THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY  
OF THE VSA LONDON SUMMER SCHOOL

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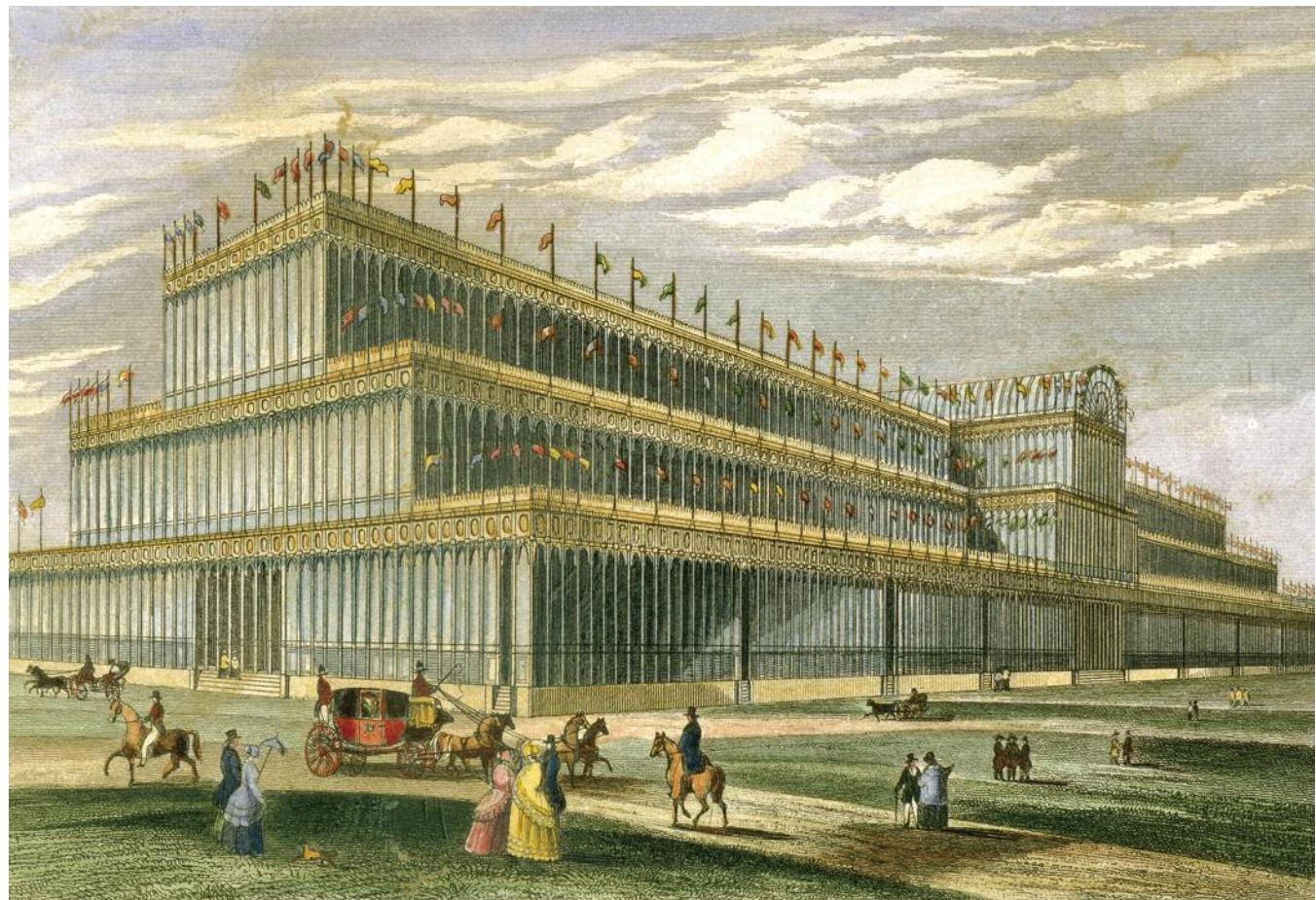
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The Crystal Palace, London, 1851. Rakow Research Library, Corning Museum of Glass.

# Owen Jones and the Interior Decoration of the London Crystal Palace

CAROL A. HRVOL FLORES

In an age characterized by revolutionary changes in industry and society, and the insecurity caused by those changes, Owen Jones (1809-1874) stands out as a figure of incredible vision, intelligence and talent. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Jones understood the conditions and problems of the nineteenth century and was undaunted by them. He embraced the potential and opportunities offered by the development of new materials and technology and called for innovation in architecture to adopt these advances and solve the demands for new types of buildings at a larger scale.

Jones was born in London in 1809 and by age twenty-six distinguished himself with a lecture entitled "The Influence of Religion Upon Art." In this presentation to the Architectural Society, Jones introduced the idea of a strong bond between culture and architecture. Using examples from antiquity, he demonstrated how earlier architecture had been dominated by the religious beliefs of the people who constructed it and how those beliefs were expressed in every object produced by the society, from the simplest utensil to the grandest monument. In contrast, he observed that the current age, having supplanted the worship of God by the worship of Mammon, seemed incapable of developing an appropriate style to serve the needs or affirm the beliefs of a dramatically changing society. He criticized his colleagues for copying and misapplying historical motifs and for producing gin-palaces with temple fronts and workhouses in the guise of medieval mansions.

Denouncing the artificiality and pretense of these buildings, Jones advocated a new style more appropriate to reflect the spirit and possibilities of the age. Observing that modern accomplishments were based upon science, rather than faith, he believed that the new style should build upon modern advances in materials and technology enriched through aesthetics. His call for a new style did not gain immediate acceptance, but his insight into the strong bond between culture and architecture became the basis of most nineteenth-century architectural philosophy, including the theories later proposed by A.W.N. Pugin (1812-1852) and John Ruskin (1819-1900).

Jones based his remarks on knowledge gained through five years of training in the architectural office of Louis Vuillamy (1791-1871) followed by several years of travel

throughout Europe and the Middle East (1830-1834). In 1834, Jones and the French architect Jules Goury spent six months studying the Alhambra complex in Granada, Spain. To most of their contemporaries, the medieval palace built by the Moors represented romance and exoticism, as evidenced in the paintings of David Roberts and Eugène Delacroix and in the novels of Washington Irving and Victor Hugo, but Jones and Goury took a different approach. They studied the Alhambra as a built work, producing measured drawings, documenting the plan, and identifying the resources and methods used to create walls that denied materiality and domes that appeared to float overhead. They paid particular attention to the decoration and colors surviving in the complex, making plaster casts and tracings of many of the ornamental details.

Their investigation ended in August 1834, when Goury died of cholera. Jones accompanied his friend's body to France for burial and then traveled to England to publish their findings, but found no publisher capable of producing

the colored illustrations he desired. Colored images were possible, but cost prohibitive, since each image had to be hand-engraved upon a copper plate or carved on a wood block, imprinted on paper, and then colored by hand. Experiments with multicolored illustrations printed from lithographic plates had been conducted with some success in France, Germany and England, but no London publisher was competent to render the volume and complexity of designs Jones desired.

Determined to produce the work from engravings and chromolithographs, he decided to undertake the printing himself. He leased space, purchased presses and hired draughtsman and lithographic printers. After considerable expense and experiment, he produced two volumes: the *Plans, Elevations, Sections, and Details of the Alhambra*, issued in parts between 1836 and 1845, and the second volume, *Details and Ornaments from the Alhambra*, distributed in two parts in 1842 and 1845. The beauty of the images in these texts drew immediate acclaim and critics began calling the young architect "Alhambra Jones" in recognition of his advances in publishing and in appreciation for his comprehensive research and the quality of his analysis.



Charles Baugniet, *Owen Jones*, 1843.



Jones experimented with color printing to illustrate the color remaining in the Alhambra and to reconstruct his interpretation of the original colors. His use of strong, gouache-like, primaries opened up new possibilities for rich color in all types of publication and launched a new industry: the production of lavishly “illuminated” gift books intended for visual pleasure. He designed a range of these books, containing literary excerpts or quotations from the Bible set within geometric or nature-inspired borders. The gift books appealed to the Victorians’ fondness for objects displayed as symbols of taste and status, while the plates raised the level of color printing to a fine art.

In 1841, Jones and the publisher John Murray advanced British publishing further by integrating illustrations, decoration and text in a new edition of J. G. Lockhart’s *Ancient Spanish Ballads*. The book contained handsome woodblock prints by recognized artists and innovations by Jones in the design of the book’s cover, title pages, vignettes and borders. These additions introduced a new artistic unity in book publication.

Jones followed these contributions to the graphic culture of Victorian Britain by demonstrating his advanced understanding of color and visual perception in the decoration of the most important building in mid-nineteenth century England: the building popularly known as the Crystal Palace, constructed in 1851 to house the world’s first international trade fair. Most accounts of the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations focus on the events and individuals responsible for the enterprise, the design and construction of the innovative iron-and-glass building or descriptions of the items displayed, with slight acknowledgement, if any, to the contributions of the architect, Owen Jones. Jones’s role is significant, however, since he was unique in envisioning the unprecedented space being created and in devising a scheme to transform the industrial materials of construction into an edifice worthy of representing the capabilities of Britain.

Jones’s official connection with the Great Exhibition began when he, Matthew Digby Wyatt (1820-77) and the engineer, Charles H. Wild (1819-1857), were hired to assist in preparing the Building Committee’s design for the Exhibition’s structure. Jones is thought to be the delineator of the Committee’s proposal published in the *Illustrated London News* on June 22, 1850.<sup>1</sup> When the iron-and-glass scheme presented by Joseph Paxton (1803-65) was selected over the Building Committee’s brick design, Jones and Wild were named Superintendent of the Works to collaborate with the contractors, Fox and Henderson on the project. Wild was in charge of checking the specifications and testing the structural members and Jones was responsible for the decoration of the building and grounds and for planning the arrangement of the items to be displayed.<sup>2</sup>

Jones revised Paxton’s plan, changing entrances, designing stairways and adding a six and one-half foot fence around the building. He also designed a unique twenty-four foot clock, the largest in England, for over the main entrance to the building. Since the hands of the clock were moved electrically, eliminating the cumbersome weights of traditional timepieces, *Hunt’s Handbook to the Official Catalogues* of the Exhibition hailed the clock as an example of man’s triumph over the physical forces of nature and as an appropriate marker at the entrance to the exposition celebrating man’s achievements.<sup>3</sup>

Jones also devised the highly praised plan for arranging over one hundred thousand items on more than eight miles of tables. *The Times* lauded his arrangement for alleviating jealousy and dissatisfaction among foreign exhibitors, since each country’s products were to be displayed within a separate framework, forming a center of attraction and reducing comparisons with neighboring displays. The layout of Britain’s displays received further approval, since the least attractive items, such as machinery, raw materials, and produce were placed along the sides of the building, reserving the central areas for more attractive manufactured goods and fine arts objects.<sup>4</sup>

Jones’s most noticeable contribution and greatest political challenge, however, was the building’s decoration. By November 1850, construction was progressing rapidly, but nothing had been decided on the decoration. Jones proposed a plan to enhance the building by painting the interior in the primary colors to create an illusion of greater height, depth and width than the actual construction. Prince Albert, the Royal Commissioners and the public vehemently rejected this proposal, claiming that it would be painful and vulgar if executed, but Jones persisted, defending his scheme with perspective drawings and paint trials on sections of the building in different color combinations. The paint trials gained the commissioners consent, but most who viewed the trial were not impressed. In fact, criticism of Jones’s scheme reached such intensity that the press began calling the debate over the building’s decoration “the Great Paint Question.”

The furor over the decoration of the building continued into January, but, as the painting progressed, opinion began to shift, until on opening day, the press and the public erupted in unrestrained admiration of Jones’s scheme. Observers praised the “general lightness and fairy-like brilliance never before dreamed of” and described the interior as having “a

Above: “Details of the Great Arcade” from *Plans, Elevations, Sections and Details of the Alhambra*, Vol. 1, 1842.

quietness and yet a splendour, a repose and yet a grandeur" which enchanted and amazed the viewers.<sup>6</sup>

Lothar Bucher, a German reporter described the effect of the building, saying:

If we let our gaze slowly move downwards...it encounters the filigreed girders, painted blue, far apart from each other at first, then moving ever closer, then superimposed on each other...then finally dissolving in a remote background in which everything corporeal, even the lines themselves, disappear and only the colour remains. I had the impression that the coarse matter with which architecture works was completely dissolved in colour. The building was not decorated with colour, but built up of it.<sup>7</sup>

The success of Jones's unprecedented scheme is remarkable when the circumstances are considered. Jones had to anticipate unfamiliar visual effects in an enormous structure to be filled with unpredictable contents. Fortunately, his understanding of the effects produced in the vast structures of ancient architecture and his interest in the latest optical studies on color and sensation enabled him to harmonize the effects produced by the building and its contents.

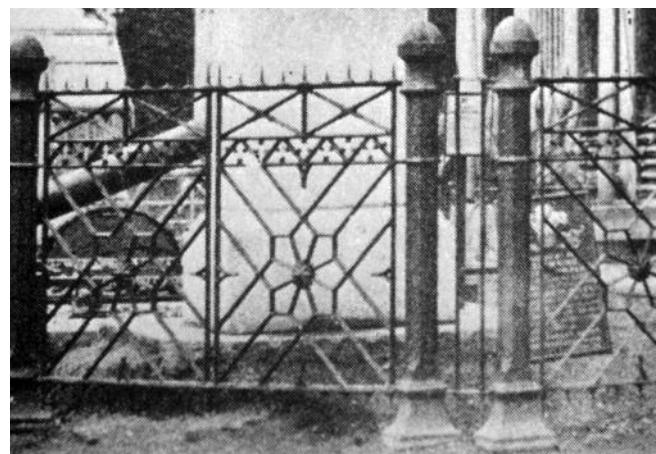
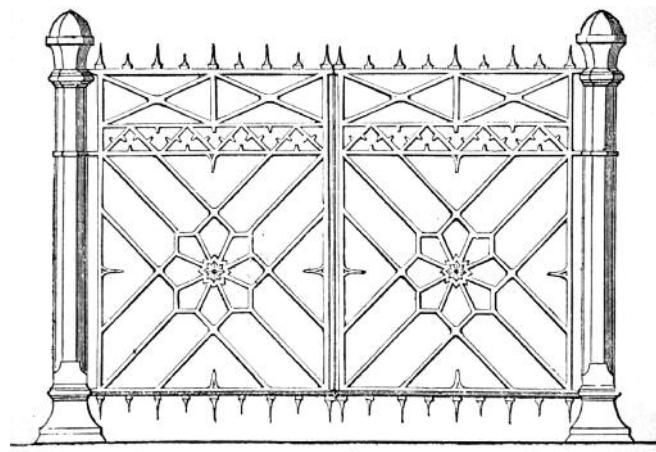
At the conclusion of the Great Exhibition, the Crystal Palace was disassembled and then reconfigured and re-erected outside London in Sydenham with considerably different objectives. While the Hyde Park structure symbolized the progressive spirit manifest in the invitation to all nations to join in a peaceful demonstration of the results of their labor, the Crystal Palace at Sydenham exemplified another important nineteenth-century consciousness: the utopian desire to improve society through enlightened recreation. This moral purpose prompted a new building type, known as the Palace of the People, incorporating the benefits of a museum, concert hall and winter garden with exhibition areas and extensively landscaped grounds.<sup>8</sup>

Jones was involved in designing many features of the Sydenham building and gardens, including an outdoor café, the circular pergola called a Rosary and some of the Fine Arts Courts. He also planned the decoration of the facility, changing the color scheme to complement the winter garden at the center of the building, specifying red columns with blue and yellow accents to provide contrast to the foliage.

The principal attractions were the Fine Arts Courts intended to present a history of sculpture and architecture from Egypt to current times. The Courts displayed casts of famous sculptures and restorations of significant monuments placed within contexts intended to be more informative than the exhibits of isolated objects in the British Museum.<sup>10</sup> Owen Jones and Matthew Digby Wyatt were hired to design the courts and given a budget of twenty thousand pounds, plus travel expenses, to visit the finest museums and collections in Europe and the Middle East to obtain casts of the sculptures and ornament. When they returned, Jones created the Greek, Egyptian, Alhambra, Roman, and Modern Sculpture Courts; Matthew Digby Wyatt produced the Pompeian, Byzantine, Medieval, Renaissance, Italian, and Elizabethan Courts, and the historian, James Fergusson, completed the Nineveh Court (also called the Nineveh Palace or the Assyrian Court).<sup>11</sup>

The designers believed the Fine Arts Courts offered a significant opportunity to effect public taste in a meaningful way. Jones had been promoting the need for education in the arts for almost two decades in an attempt to raise the standards of British manufacturing. He criticized the overwrought items displayed in the Great Exhibition, blaming the designers, manufacturers, and public for valuing excess, historicism, and realistic imitation over good design and saw the Fine Arts Courts as a way to introduce both the trained professional and the untrained visitor to art and architecture. He also recommended guidebooks written by experts to explain the displays.<sup>12</sup>

Great care was taken to ensure the accuracy of the monuments recreated and to explain reductions in scale, juxtapositions of portions of monuments from different periods and the particular achievements of each culture. Jones's recreation of the Court of the Lions, the Tribunal of Justice, and the Hall of the Abencerrages in the Alhambra Court drew universal praise and admiration and according to popular opinion, the Court of the Lions was the finest court at Sydenham. In contrast, his decoration of the Greek Court provoked controversy, since Jones demonstrated various contentious theories concerning the use of color in ancient architecture. The press supported Jones's claim that ancient architecture had been painted and praised the color



(Top to bottom): Design for the fence around the exterior of the Great Exhibition Building, Hyde Park, London, 1851. *The Illustrated London News*. Fence for the exterior of the Great Exhibition Building.



(L to R): Henry Courtney Selous, *Opening of the Great Exhibition by Queen Victoria on 1st May, 1851*, c. 1852. Watercolor showing the proposed decoration of the Great Exhibition Building, Hyde Park, London, 1850. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

scheme he used in the ceiling of the Greek Court, demonstrating patterns from the temple at Bassae and the acropolis in Athens.<sup>13</sup>

The Fine Arts Courts won praise for presenting more wonders than the average person could experience in a lifetime, and delighted visitors as diverse as the art critic, John Ruskin (1819-1900) and later, the Modernist architect, Le Corbusier (1887-1965). Jones's courts received particular acclaim and as, with many of his other works, became familiar references in the professional press and in the popular culture. Examples of this regard include Dr. Christopher Dresser's (1834-1904) recommendation that information on Egyptian decoration could be found in Jones's *Grammar of Ornament* and "especially by a visit to the Egyptian Court of the Crystal Palace at Sydenham." At Jones's death, *The Building News* attributed the advances made in the decorative arts to Jones, saying that the principles he demonstrated "in the courts at Sydenham have largely educated the popular eye and taste."<sup>14</sup>

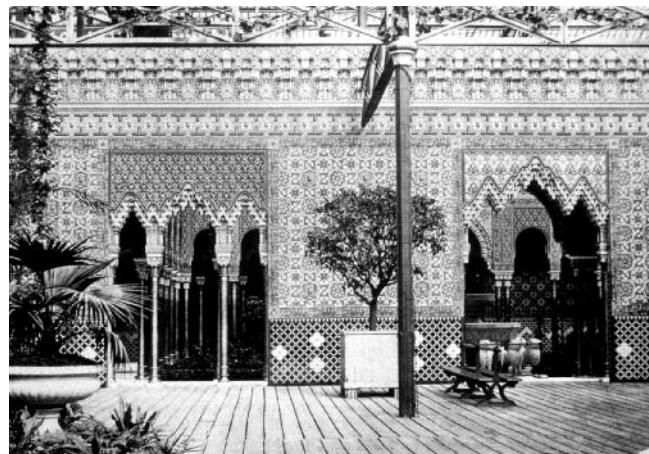
The successful decoration of both Crystal Palaces brought Jones national attention and he used the spotlight to further his campaign for architectural reform, improved design education, and the elevation of public taste. In a series of lectures and articles, he outlined principles to improve British design, including the appropriate use of ornament, a subject of intense debate in the nineteenth century. Jones believed that ornament was secondary to a building's form and function. He blamed the failure of contemporary architecture on the disregard for function and praised the decoration of the Alhambra as an example of ornament used to enhance construction. He explained that the Moors achieved beauty through the use of geometric patterns derived from a grid and noted that grids offered infinite possibilities for new configurations, where every line contributes to the overall effect without interfering with the general form of the item decorated. He contrasted this approach to the direct imitation of Nature dominating Victorian decoration and criticized contemporary realism,



saying that flowers and other natural objects should not be copied but that two-dimensional abstractions inspired by nature should be used instead.

The British Schools of Design adopted Jones's principles and he demonstrated his ideas in prolific designs for wallpapers, textiles and other furnishings for the country's leading manufacturers. By 1855, his designs were receiving awards at international exhibitions and *The Furniture Gazette* credited him for the country's improvement in ornamental art. Critics praised the subtlety, ingenuity and refinement of his patterns and their successful adaption to mechanical production. Jones was unusual in learning the manufacturing process for each item he designed and, when possible, used the production process to contribute to the pattern. This is most obvious in his silk designs, where he used the weaving process to add dimension in complex patterns.

Jones continued to advance design education with his publication of *The Grammar of Ornament* (1856), an encyclopedic study of decoration including one hundred plates of historical motifs, twenty essays and an expanded



Philip Delamotte, *Entrance to the Court of the Lions, Alhambra Court, Crystal Palace, Sydenham, 1854*.

list of his principles. *The Grammar* has been adopted in schools of design and architecture all over Europe and the U.S., resulting in an extraordinary distribution of Jones's ideas. He also demonstrated his ideas through his popular designs for domestic items and in major design commissions and competitions. These include the contest for the design of the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition Building and proposals for a Palace of the People intended for Muswell Hill (London), the expansion of the National Gallery and a permanent exhibition structure for St. Cloud, France, which many believe would have been the best iron-and-glass building of the nineteenth-century, if it had been realized.

Although these innovative structures of grand scale and ethereal beauty were never built, Jones's St. James's Concert Hall (1858) served as London's primary concert facility for almost fifty years(Figures 19 and 20). The Royal Society of Music presented the annual performance of the *Messiah* in St. James's and the owner, William Chappell introduced the ideas of Popular Concerts and the "Pops" were an immediate success. Audiences listened to readings by Charles Dickens and music by major international artists, including Liszt, Dvorak, Grieg and Tchaikovsky.

St. James's was a revolutionary iron structure with brick used as in-fill, not for traditional support. The professional journal, *The Builder*, praised the construction and suggested that Jones's method could lead to a significant change in building practice, since iron had not been adopted previously as the major structural material for permanent buildings. Jones was praised for the decoration and for his improvements in acoustics, ventilation, and lighting. St. James's Hall remained a favorite of Londoners until 1905 when it was demolished and replaced by a luxury hotel.<sup>15</sup>

Jones's schemes for public buildings establish his importance as a designer who not only called for a new style of architecture, but as a theorist and visionary who was more successful than most in comprehending what a new style required, how it was to be achieved, and in seeing some of his ideas implemented in construction and distributed through publication. He created places of interest and excitement to satisfy a populace captivated by huge public assemblies and spectacle. His unique structures glowed with light, color, and harmonious decoration capable of transporting Londoners, plagued by dismal fogs and Regency monotony, to brilliant environments of grandeur and drama. These designs indicate Jones's comprehension of the mentality and spirit of his age. His plans for magnificent structures to elevate public taste and raise the educational level of the masses respond to Victorian preoccupations with public improvement and the belief that architecture played an important role in the progress of society. He understood his generation's love of public events and social promenade, and applied his talents to satisfy these preferences, producing structures both functional and sublime.

Jones died in April 1874 and within two weeks of his death, a committee was formed to plan an unusual, and perhaps even unprecedented event: a memorial exhibition of the works of one man held immediately after his demise. The tribute was intended to honor the individual many believed was most responsible for improving British design.

When complete, the several hundred items displayed, including drawings, wallpapers, textiles, and furniture, demonstrated that Jones had introduced a new style, based on geometry and the inspiration from nature, carried out in designs ranging from the simplest utensil to grand public structures.



## Notes

1. Henry-Russell Hitchcock, *The Crystal Palace* (Northampton, MA: Smith College Museum of Art and MIT), 1952, 19.
2. "The Crystal Palace," *The Times*, (no date), Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851, Windsor Archives, Vol. V, on permanent loan to the 1851 Commission. I am grateful to the members of the Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851 for access to this material and, in particular, to Mrs. Valerie Phillips, Archivist, for her knowledge of the collection and valuable assistance.
3. Hitchcock, 23 and 28; *Journal of Design*, 173; *Hunt's Handbook to the Official Catalogues of the Great Exhibition*, Robert Hunt, ed. (London: The Contractors to the Royal Commission), 1851, 1-2.
4. *The Times*, (no date), Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851, Windsor Archives, Vol. VI, on permanent loan to the 1851 Commission.
5. *The Builder*, January 11, 1851, 18.
6. *The Architect*, XI, April 25, 1874 235; John McKean, *Crystal Palace* (London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1994), 28-29. "The Great Exhibition," *The Bible Class Magazine*, April 1851, 90.
7. McKean, 36.
8. The Prospectus for the Crystal Palace at Sydenham promised "A Palace of the People" with "refined recreation, calculated to elevate the intellect, instruct the mind, improve the hearts of, and welcome the millions who now haue no other incentives to pleasure but such as the gin-palace, the dancing saloon and the ale-house afford them." Eric de Maré, *London 1851: The Year of the Great Exhibition* (London: The Folio Press), 1973.
9. Michael Darby, *Owen Jones and the Eastern Ideal*. Ph. D. diss., University of Reading, 1974, 343-344.
10. *The Civil Engineer and Architect's Journal*, No. 244, Vol. XVII, July 1854, 32.
11. J. R. Piggott, *Palace of the People: the Crystal Palace at Sydenham 1851-1936* (London: Hurst & Company, 2004), 109.
12. Owen Jones, "Colour in the Decorative Arts," *Lectures on the Great Exhibition*, 2d ser. (London, 1853), 256.
13. *The Building News*, April 24, 1874, 440.
14. *The Civil Engineer and Architect's Journal*, Vol. XVII, July 1854, 241-246; 'Alhambra', *Chambers Encyclopedia*, Vol I (London: W. and R. Chambers), 1877, 144; Charlotte Gere and Michael Whiteway, *Nineteenth-Century Design from Pugin to Mackintosh* (New York: Henry N. Abrams, Inc.), 1994, 69; John Ruskin, *Lectures on Architecture and Painting (Edinburgh 1853) with Other Papers (1844-1854)* (London: George Allen, 1904), 418; *The Building News*, April 24, 1874, 440.
15. *The Builder*, 13 March 1858, 171.



E. W. Godwin, *Anglo-Japanese Designs*, c. 1870. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

# “Dear Godwino...”

## THE WILDES AND E. W. GODWIN CREATE AN AESTHETIC INTERIOR

JENNIFER ADAMS

“Dear Godwino...I must see you. I arrive tomorrow and will be with you on Saturday morning. I wish you would choose the colors – the red for the drawing room – as the thing is at a standstill: is it to be vermillion? is it not? The universe pauses for an answer! Don’t keep it waiting.”<sup>1</sup>

*Oscar Wilde to E. W. Godwin, 1884.*

A dramatic enquiry for a seemingly trivial color choice; however, for Oscar Wilde in 1884, decorative matters were not trivial. He had spent several years as the self-styled arbiter of Aesthetic taste, and now, along with the movement’s leading designer and architect, Edward W. Godwin, he had to prove he could follow his own advice. Their collaboration was not surprising. Not only did they circulate in the same artistic circles, both men were advocates for the Aesthetic Movement’s philosophy. They shared a passion for beauty in all its potential manifestations and believed it was essential to reforming a dreary, over-ornamented, and unimaginative Victorian existence. Through word and design, they spread their message of light interiors with simplified furniture and decoration, and they preached an abiding vigilance against all things ugly and distasteful.

In England in the late 1870s, Oscar Wilde (1854–1900) was an oft-ridiculed symbol of the Aesthetic Movement. When he went to America in 1882 on a lecture tour produced by Richard D’Oyly Carte, he was supposed to be a self-parody of the too-too consummate aesthete with a lily in his hand. While his velvet jackets and silk stockings did not disappoint his audiences’ expectations, he took his lectures far more seriously than many assumed. When his original “English Renaissance” lecture proved unpopular, he followed a current trend by writing two new lectures, “The Decorative Arts” and “The House Beautiful,” and transformed himself into a taste advisor on the artistic home. Borrowing—with and without attribution—from William Morris, Charles Eastlake, Mary Eliza Haweis, and possibly even Godwin, Wilde’s lectures were reprinted frequently in newspapers and proved popular enough to keep him in North America for eleven months. In the wide-ranging lectures, he extolled his belief in beauty as a social force that improves lives, educates children, and contributes to a healthful

environment. He emphasized simplicity in decoration and preached that his ideal beauty sprang from harmonious artful interiors, rather than a *mélange* of styles, media, and objects. He also preached the need for artists’ input, stating that the lack of artistic input in modern interiors and objects created the disgraceful aesthetics of the modern age.

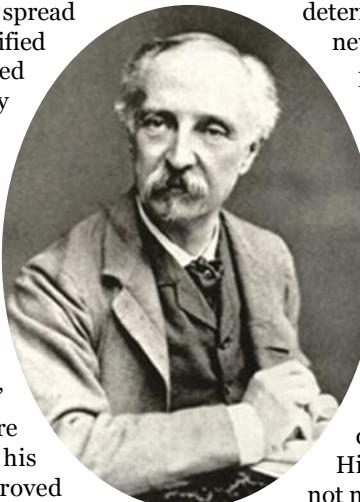
Widely covered by North American newspapers throughout the tour, by 1883 Wilde and Aestheticism were well known on both sides of the Atlantic. He sailed from America to Paris with the goal of reestablishing his literary career. His book, *Poems*, had been published in 1882 and he

wanted to promote it in France and England. He also determined to change his image. In Paris he told a new acquaintance, Robert Sherard,

I discarded my eccentricities of costume and had my hair cut. All that belonged to the Oscar of the first period. We are now concerned with the Oscar Wilde of the second period, who has nothing whatever in common with the gentleman who wore long hair and carried a sunflower down Piccadilly.”<sup>2</sup>

On returning to London, Wilde continued his “House Beautiful” lectures and toured with his “Impressions of America” talk. He also wooed and married Constance Lloyd, daughter of a prosperous family from Dublin. His lecture tour had made him famous, but it did not make him wealthy. It was Constance’s marriage settlement that paid for furnishing the couple’s new London home in 1884.

The Wildes chose bohemian Chelsea, a neighborhood where Oscar had previously shared a Godwin-designed house with artist Frank Miles. As he negotiated a lease on a speculatively-built terrace house at no. 16 Tite Street, Wilde understood that he and Constance were not typical newlyweds setting up home. Although he was attempting to shift his career, he had a reputation to uphold. At first, he approached James McNeill Whistler for



Edward William Godwin  
(1833–1886)



(L to R): Oscar Wilde, as photographed by Napoleon Sarony, New York, 1882. Library of Congress. Constance and Cyril Wilde, 1889.

assistance, but his friend and sometime rival challenged him instead, replying, “No, Oscar, you have been lecturing to us about the House Beautiful; now is your chance to show us one.”<sup>3</sup> Wilde turned instead to E.W. Godwin. But the Wildes contributed their own aesthetic visions to the project as well. It took many months, large expenditures, and legal disputes with two contractors, but they succeeded in creating their joint version of the modern, artistic, simply-decorated home.

Edward William Godwin (1833–1886) was a Victorian polymath: architect, interior decorator, furniture designer, and theatre designer. Beginning his career as a Gothic Revival architect in the 1860s, Godwin was heavily influenced by Japanese design and “Queen Anne” architects such as Richard Norman Shaw, but he soon moved toward



Tite Street, London, c. 1880.

greater simplicity in his architecture and furniture. By the 1870s, he was advocating a less-is-more style for interior decoration and was designing his iconic ebonized furniture later praised for its proto-modern tendencies.<sup>4</sup> Godwin also wrote prolifically in the 1870s, becoming the editor of the *British Architect* and *Northern Engineer* in 1878.<sup>5</sup> He roundly criticized “the presuming amateur and inexperienced artists, who in these latter days have developed the knack of posing as apostles of domestic art, endeavoring by noise and crowd to fill the place of those whose works and experience are warranty of their judgment.”<sup>6</sup> Despite such petulance, he eloquently expounded key philosophies of the Aesthetic Movement: “Hellenistic” spirit, Japanese-inspired decoration, healthful environments, and beauty as powerful, improving cultural force.

Constance Wilde (1858–1898) played an active role in the design of her home and proved to be an equally eloquent advocate for Aesthetic decorative principles. Art and Aestheticism were a part of the Wildes’ relationship from the beginning, even if Constance sometimes had misgivings. She wrote to her fiancé,

I am afraid you and I disagree in our opinions on art, for I hold that there is no perfect art without perfect morality, whilst you say that they are distinct and separable things and of course you have your knowledge to combat my ignorance with. Truly I am no judge that you should appeal to me for opinions, and even if I were, I know that I should judge you rather by your aims than by your work and you would say I was wrong.<sup>7</sup>

As the Tite Street project developed, so too did Constance’s confidence in her opinions. She was actively involved in

design meetings and decisions, even attempting to corner Godwin at his club to discuss curtain patterns.<sup>8</sup> In a newspaper article, she discussed her own thoughts on interior decoration, which were similar to those of her husband and her architect. When asked if she favored simplicity, she stated,

A cottage parlour may be, and often is, more beautiful, with its uncommonly achieved harmonies and soft coloring, than a great reception room, arranged more with a view to producing a magnificent effect. But, I repeat, of late, people in their wish to decorate their homes, have blended various periods, colorings, and designs, each perhaps beautiful in itself, but producing an unfortunate effect when placed in juxtaposition. I object also to historic schemes of decoration, which nearly always make one think of the upholsterer, and not of the owner of the house."<sup>9</sup>

If she had once disagreed with her husband's views on art, she was content to echo his views on decoration.

Ironically, Godwin might have once condemned Wilde as one of those posing apostles he criticized. However, for him the Wildes' commission was another chance to experiment with home interiors. He had completed high profile commissions in the past – Whistler, most notably – so he was not daunted by having the apostle of Aestheticism as a client.<sup>10</sup> In fact, Wilde's correspondence indicates that he was more than willing to defer to most of Godwin's instructions and provide on unobstructed work space for Godwin's design theories. For Wilde, his home was the moment to turn both his rhetoric and, to a certain extent, himself into reality. He had to prove to his circle of artistic and literary elites that he could create the kind of environment that he had urged on all of his lecture audiences. Furthermore, with his largely itinerant, bachelor life now ended, he could ensconce his family in the beautifully-constructed existence that he proclaimed as life's ultimate goal. In addition, despite his practiced rhetoric, he probably could not have accomplished such a polished and unusual interior without Godwin. With some urgency Wilde told Godwin "the house *must* be a success."<sup>11</sup>

"To Oscar Wilde's weird house, dullish" was the blunt judgment meted out by Marion Sambourne in her diary concerning one of her social engagements.<sup>12</sup> The wife of *Punch* cartoonist Linley Sambourne, she prided herself on the typical, profusely furnished upper-middle-class interior of her 1870s terrace London home in fashionable Kensington. The avant-garde, sparsely decorated house created by the Wildes and Godwin in bohemian Chelsea was clearly outside the mainstream of even those who considered themselves among the sophisticated cultural elites of the day. However, the Wildes' interior design was not significantly different from decorative schemes that Godwin created for Whistler, for Frank Miles, and indeed for his own house.

No extant renderings or photographs of the

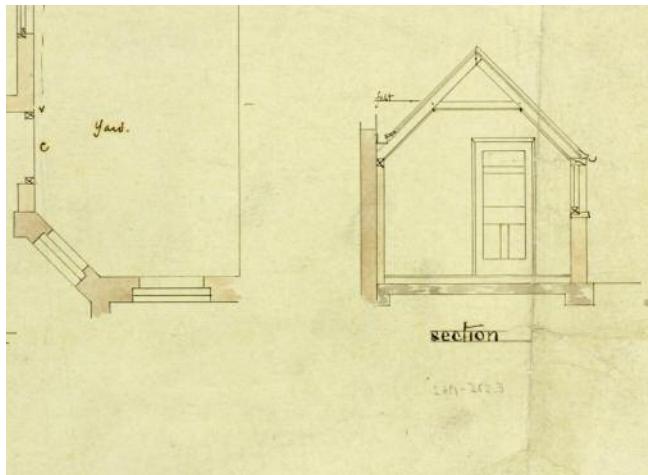
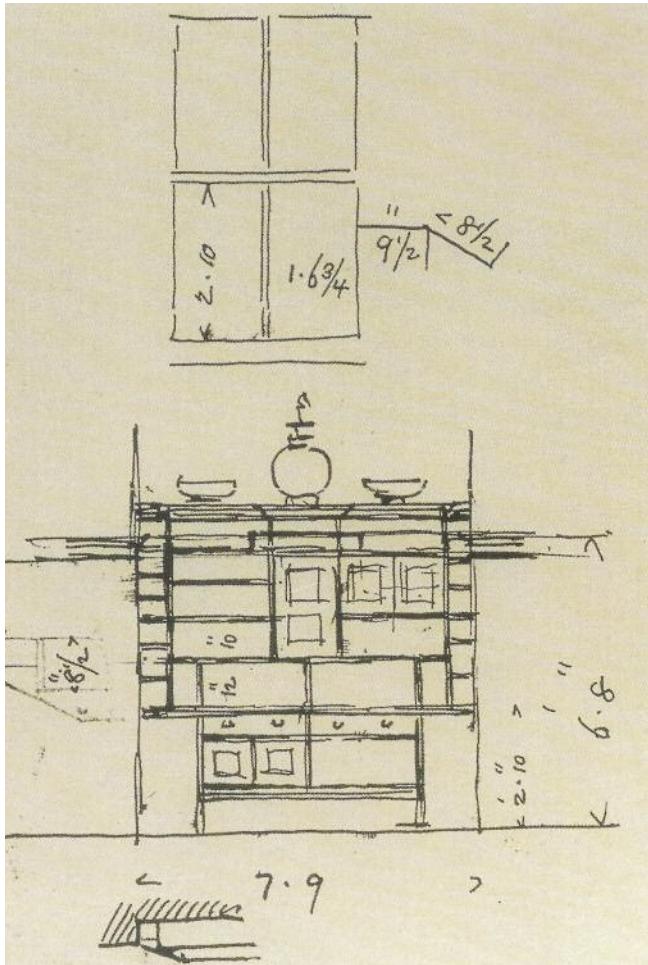
interior of no. 16 Tite Street show the finalized interiors. References to the rooms must be sought from contracts, letters, articles, and visitors' recollections. It is not possible to ascertain if all of the proposed Godwin designs and colors made it into the finished house. No matter the final reality, the intent of architect and his clients was a living picture of their quintessential Aesthetic home. Their canvas was an ordinary middle-class home of the late nineteenth century. Beyond the ground-floor entry hall was a library and the dining room. The first floor contained a double drawing room while the upper two floors contained three bedrooms, a study and a bathroom.<sup>13</sup> They painted its interior in pale colors, eschewing the popular, decorative Morris-style papers. Then they added additional colors through furnishing fabrics, artwork, and some *Japonesque* touches. Godwin wrote a "memorandum of alterations painters & joiners work to be done at no. 16 Tite Street Chelsea for Oscar Wilde Esq." but did not date it. Presumably he drafted it early in the design process. Consisting mainly of written instructions, the first part of the document outlined structural changes such as altering moldings, adding a built-in seat in the dining room and making a pass-through between the kitchen and dining room. In the second part of the document, he detailed the paint schemes for each room. On a separate large sheet of paper, he sketched moldings and mantelpieces, marking them with letters that he referenced in the notes.<sup>14</sup> While this allows for a partial visualization of each space, he unfortunately did not draw entire room layouts.

After scratching out several colors, Godwin described the room that would become known for its whiteness: "Dining



E. W. Godwin, watercolor sketch for wallpaper pattern, c. 1870. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Room: The whole of woodwork to be enamel white to walls in oils enamel white-grey to the height of 5'-6"<sup>15</sup>. Wilde's son, Vyvyan Holland, who lived in the house until age nine, recollected the pitfalls of such a pristine environment: "the prevailing note in the dining room was white blending with pale blue and yellow. The walls were white; the Chippendale chairs were painted white and upholstered in white plush, and the carpet, concerning the cleanliness of which we were constantly being admonished, was also white."<sup>16</sup> In his

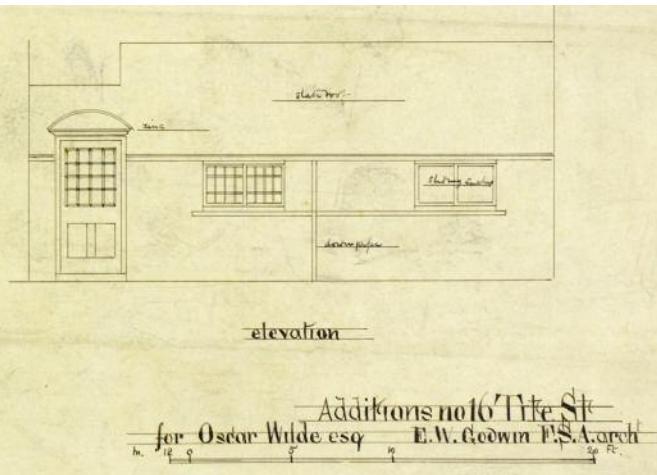


(Top to bottom): Dining room sideboard, E. W. Godwin. The Hyde Collection. "Addtion to no. 16 Tite St. for Oscar Wilde esq", E. W. Godwin. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

autobiography, W. B. Yeats recalled a Christmas dinner in the late 1880s in "a dining room all white, chairs, walls, mantelpiece, carpet, except for a diamond-shaped piece of red cloth in the middle of the table under a terra-cotta statuette, and I think a red-shaped lamp hanging."<sup>17</sup> In his sketches, Godwin drew an elaborate dining room sideboard, eight feet tall by eight feet wide, alinear, unornamented piece with combinations of open shelves and cabinet doors in a typical Godwin art-furniture style. He even drew pieces of blue and white china on the top.<sup>18</sup>

The library functioned as Wilde's study and was the room in which he did most of his work. Godwin imagined it in warm golden tones and dark blue walls. Apparently Wilde or Godwin removed the blue distemper (an inexpensive house paint) along the way because Vyvyan described the library with pale yellow walls and enameled red woodwork where most of the space was given over to books. It also contained a "colossal bust of Apollo," a number of bronzes, a Chinese lantern, a Persian carpet as well as a sheepskin rug, and several easy chairs. Wilde broke his own rules and indulged in some Victorian clutter in his study, perhaps to surround himself with prized possessions and for artistic inspiration.<sup>19</sup>

Godwin then described the two-section drawing room on the first floor with a front room painted with more white and golden tones and a ceiling with "Japanese leather which will be provided by Mr. Wilde." The back room was dark greens with brown woodwork and fireplace.<sup>20</sup> Godwin's plan included a sketch of a bronze-inlaid overmantel in the front room. The completed rooms were similar to the descriptions. Vyvyan recalled buttercup yellow walls and a special decorative element: "As a concession to Whistler, who conceived the idea, two large, many-hued Japanese feathers were incorporated into the ceilings."<sup>22</sup> In 1891 a reporter confirmed the appearance of the feathers, adding, "Rare engravings and etching form a deep frieze along two sides of the drawing room, and stand out on a dull gold background, and the only touches of bright colour in the apartment are lent by two splendid Japanese feathers let into the ceiling, while, above the white, carved mantelpiece, a gilt copper bas relief, by Donaghue, makes living Mr. Oscar Wilde's fine verses, 'Requiescat.'"<sup>23</sup> According to Vyvyan, the back drawing room was his father's exotic smoking-



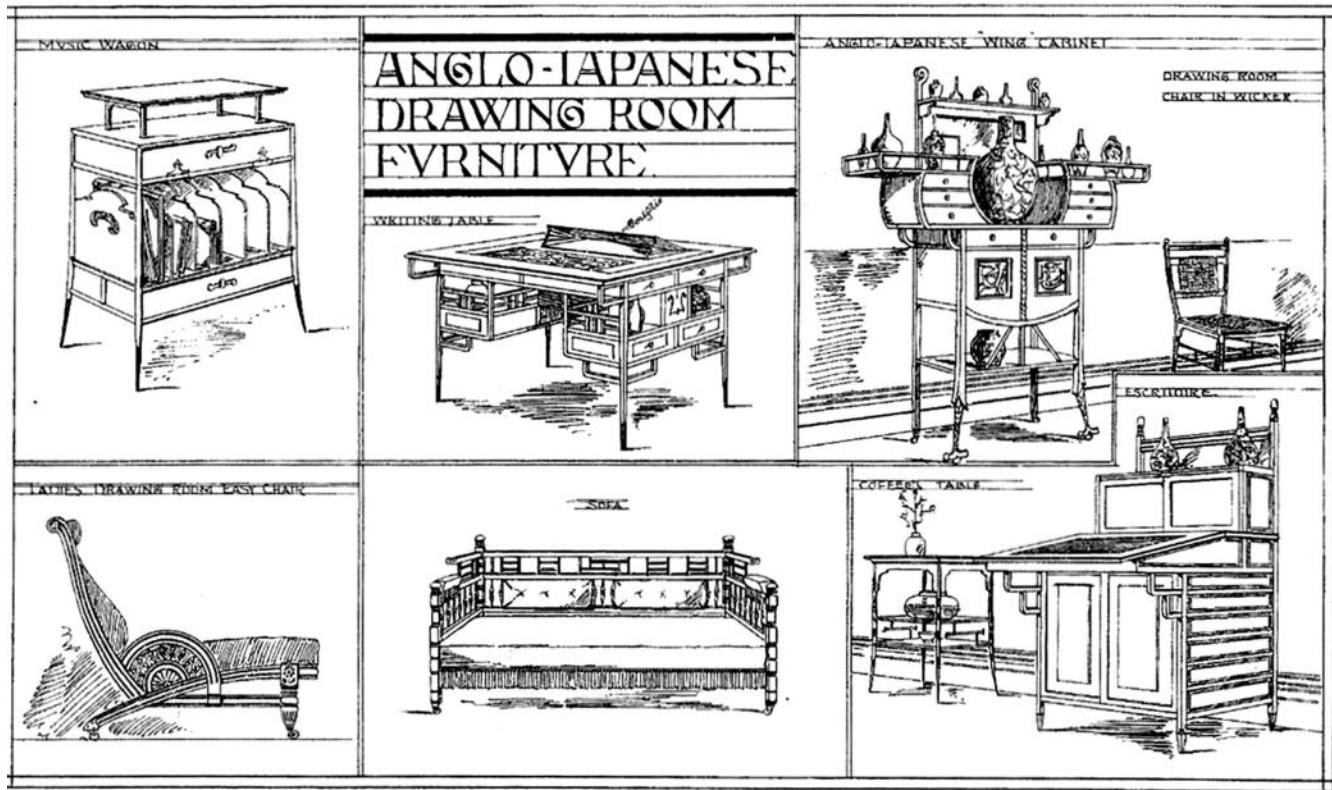


Plate no. 8, *Art Furniture Designed by Edward W. Godwin and manufactured by William Watt, 21 Grafton Street, London. 1877.*

room, a dark, “awe-inspiring” room done in Lincrusta wall covering and furnished with “divans, ottomans and Moorish hangings.”<sup>24</sup> The furnishings probably included Moorish screens, a Persian mosque lamp and pearl-inlaid olivewood tables, together with Chinese and Japanese decorative elements.<sup>25</sup>

Godwin continued his plan for each room of the house including a pink and green bedroom, a dark blue bedroom, and Wilde’s bedroom of “greyish pink-red upper walls over red russet brown.” Next to this notation, Godwin even included a few strokes of watercolor to demonstrate the two colors he recommended.<sup>26</sup> Despite her professed views, Constance apparently reacted against the modern austerity of the rest of the house in her own bedroom furnishings. Her son describes her bedroom as typically Victorian: stuffed chairs, lace curtains, drapery, many book cases, and embroidery, of which his mother was a skilled practitioner.<sup>27</sup> She may have been the consummate Aesthetic wife, but she was independent enough to decorate her own room exactly as she pleased without reference to Aesthetic dictates.

Correspondence between the Wildes and “Godwino” provide further clues to decorative choices at Tite Street and some evidence that the designs that Godwin’s discussed were actually built. For example, in a letter dated December 1884, Oscar questioned the charges of his contractor and stated that he had already paid for the overmantels in bedroom and drawing room and the sideboard “which by the bye I thought very dear.”<sup>28</sup> The dining room, however, continued to be a center of activity, with Wilde questioning Godwin in another letter about the sense of putting a fourteen-foot long shelf along one wall. Then, in the spring of 1885, he wrote “there is also a question of another board

in dining room, and some kind of shelf, bracket, or little cupboard over it, a sort of Japanese arrangement of shelves – but very tiny.”<sup>29</sup> Were these additional constructions in lieu of the sideboard or perhaps an edit of Godwin’s original, grand design? Vyvyan Holland remembered a glass-covered cabinet on the wall and a sideboard that sat on a platform one step above the floor, but does not mention its size or appearance.<sup>30</sup> The final furnishings of the room are unknown, but a reasonable conclusion is that much of it was custom-built to Godwin’s designs.

The white dining room was highly unusual for its day, and its furniture was equally unusual for its designer. Known for his ebonized pieces, Godwin specified white furniture here that Wilde found visually impressive, if a bit impractical. He wrote in the spring of 1885, “I enclose a cheque and thank you very much for the beautiful designs of the furniture: each chair is a sonnet of ivory, and the table is a masterpiece in pearl.”<sup>31</sup> However, when he actually had to live with it, he had a different assessment. “Dear Godwino, ...Of course we miss you, but the white furniture reminds us of you daily, and we find that a rose leaf can be laid on the ivory table without scratching it—at least a white one can. That is something.”<sup>32</sup> Other furniture in the house, as noted in the contractor’s journal, was also painted in white enamel including “4 chairs, 2 settees, towell horse, wash stand, looking glass, 4 bedroom chairs.”<sup>33</sup> In the end, even Oscar seemed concerned about the austere appearance of his white furniture and plain painted walls, asking Godwin to “do just add the bloom of color to it in curtains and cushions.”<sup>34</sup>

Sharing the architect’s interest in *Japonisme*, Constance and Oscar wished to add Japanese elements to the décor. The 1884 International Health Exhibition, known as the



(L to R): The Wilde's house, 16 Tite Street, London. Frank Miles's house, 44 Tite Street. Photographs by Jennifer Adams.

"Healtheries," in London was the apparent focus of some of their acquisitions. Constance writes to Godwin that the contractor, Sharpe, has "gone today to the Healtheries to get the Japanese things."<sup>35</sup> Oscar apparently wanted to shop with his architect, writing that "I want if possible to spend a day with you at the Healtheries—the Japanese court is exquisite."<sup>36</sup> Vyvyan recalled the results saying that in "the first floor Pre-Raphaelitism was given free rein, though a certain amount of Japonaiserie had crept in." He remembered "black-and-white bamboo chairs and bulrushes in Japanese vases."<sup>37</sup> The Wildes clearly shared Godwin's view that Japanese pieces were perfect decorative additions to their artistic home. Ironically, when interviewed in 1891, Constance downplayed the quality and importance of Japanese art, stating that much of it was created for the English market and had become overused as knick knacks in many middle class homes.<sup>38</sup>

Wilde's only written assessment of his home came in a letter to architect and designer W. A. S. Benson, dated May 1885. In arguing against Benson about the decorative benefit of wallpaper, Wilde exposed his attitude toward his dwelling as a sanctuary of repose and inspiration. He praised painted walls for their cleanliness and the fact that embroideries and oil paintings do not spoil the appearance. He explained that a "knowledge of color harmonies" was essential. "I have for instance a dining-room done in different shades of white, with white curtains embroidered in yellow-silk: the effect is absolutely delightful, and the room is beautiful." He continues:

My eye requires in a room a resting-place of pure color, and I prefer to keep design for more delicate materials than papers, for embroidery for instance. Paper in itself

is not a lovely material, and the only papers which I ever use now are the Japanese gold ones: they are exceedingly decorative, and no English paper can compete with them, either for beauty or for practical wear. With these and with color in oil and distemper a lovely house can be made.

...Anybody with a real artistic sense must see the value and repose of pure color, and even taking the matter in a practical light, wallpapers collect dirt and dust to a great extent and cannot be cleaned. They are economical and often pretty and charming but they are not the final word of Art in decoration by any means.<sup>39</sup>

Godwin had expressed similar views on walls and wallpaper in the *Architect* in 1876, and Constance would repeat similar opinions in 1891. By all evidence, the collective taste and vision of these three Aesthetes intersected in the interiors of no. 16 Tite Street.

Did the Wildes and E.W. Godwin succeed in creating the quintessential Aesthetic home? Even if visual evidence does not exist, written evidence indicates that many of the rooms' interiors were highly unusual for the period. While they followed contemporary fashion by including art, embroidery, and Japanese touches, the rooms were distinctive in that they were simple, monochromatic, and mostly lacked wallpaper. If not the ultimate exemplar of the Aesthetic Movement, the interiors certainly followed much of the advice that Wilde and Godwin had published in its name over the preceding years.

It would be Godwin's last interior design commission and his final opportunity to bring into reality his prescriptions for tranquil, healthful and beautiful home environments.

The Wildes were willing and satisfied clients. Oscar Wilde placed his assiduously cultivated image in a tangible environment, surroundings that set him socially and artistically in the elite circle that he desired to impress. In their home, Constance Wilde became the consummate hostess to that elite circle. Her autograph book included Robert Browning, Mark Twain, Oliver Wendell Holmes, John Singer Sargent, Algernon Swinburne, Henry Irving, John Ruskin, and many other luminaries.

The Wilde family lived relatively ordinary, comfortable lives in the house, and that is precisely what Godwin and

Wilde had preached to their audiences. Ordinary homes and average lives can be enhanced by simple interiors and beautiful objects. Reflecting on the Godwin-Wilde interior many years later, W. B. Yeats paid Wilde an appropriate compliment when he gave his astute assessment: "It was perhaps too perfect in its unity, his past of a few years before had gone too completely, and I remember thinking that the perfect harmony of his life there, with his beautiful wife and his two young children, suggested some deliberate artistic composition."<sup>40</sup>



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4. Juliet Kinchin, "E. W. Godwin and Modernism," *E. W. Godwin: Aesthetic Movement Architect and Designer*, ed. Susan Weber Soros, (New York: Bard Graduate Center for the Studies in Decorative Arts, 1999) 97.
5. Juliet Kinchin and Paul Stirton, *Is Mr. Ruskin Living Too Long?* (Oxford: White Cockade Publishing, 2005), 46.
6. E.W. Godwin, "A Manifesto for Art", quoted in Kinchin, 2005, 46.
7. Constance Lloyd to Oscar Wilde, November 11, 1883, Oscar Wilde papers, Eccles Bequest, Add. 81690, Manuscript Reading Room, British Library, London, U.K.
8. Constance Wilde to Godwin, December 16, 1884, Oscar Wilde papers, Eccles Bequest, Add. 81690, Manuscript Reading Room, British Library, London, U.K.
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10. Godwin designed and built four commissions on Tite Street, three of which were artists' houses: White House for Whistler at 33 Tite Street, 1877-79; house & studio for Frank Miles at 44 Tite Street, 1878-79; house & studio for Archibald Stuart Wortley at 29 Tite Street, 1879-83; and Tower House flats at 46 Tite Street, 1881-85.
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16. Vyvyan Holland, *Son of Oscar Wilde*, (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers Inc., 1999), 42.
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23. "Mrs. Oscar Wilde At Home," *To-Day* (London), November 24, 1891.
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25. Mumby, 1971, 387.
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27. V. Holland, 1999, 45.
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29. Wilde to Godwin, February/March 1885, Oscar Wilde papers, Eccles Bequest, Add. 81690, Manuscript Reading Room, British Library, London, UK.
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31. Wilde to Godwin, February/March 1885, Oscar Wilde papers, Eccles Bequest, Add. 81690, Manuscript Reading Room, British Library, London, UK.
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33. Work order of contractor George Sharpe, Dece 8, 1884, Oscar Wilde papers, Eccles Bequest, Add. 81691, Manuscript Reading Room, British Library, London, UK.
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35. C. Wilde to Godwin, November 10, 1884, Oscar Wilde papers, Eccles Bequest, Add. 81691, Manuscript Reading Room, British Library, London, UK.
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Clotilde Brewster, April 1899. Brewster family collection, Florence, Italy.

# Clotilde Brewster

## AMERICAN EXPATRIATE ARCHITECT

LAURA FITZMAURICE

A woman architect! You will exclaim in horror. A woman architect! All my instincts and principles object to taking a woman out of the quiet surrounds of her own home...The young Brewster asked me in jest whether I was prepared to be one of her clients after she had completed her architectural studies.

I accepted without hesitation but warned her that before building palaces with elegant proportions she should, with all goodwill and love, prepare a simple nest as a hearth dear to those in love so that she could abandon all her ambitions.

And without being a prophet I hope I am not wrong: for even when a woman is graceful, good and rich as well as intelligent and cultivated, there is no better goal in life than to create a proper family which is then blessed with these accomplishments.

Columnist Principessa Tiberini in *La Vita Italiana, Rivista Illustrata*, 1896.

Clotilde Brewster (1874–1937), one of the first women to professionally practice architecture internationally, was born in France to an expatriate American father and an aristocratic German mother.<sup>2</sup> She spent most of her life in Europe, primarily on the Continent before settling in Britain. But if her upbringing was characterized by European sophistication and urbanity, her personality belonged to America. She was uninhibited and extremely ambitious – a woman of action who believed in hard work and who went after what she wanted without letting social niceties get in her way, but using her connections when it was to her advantage.

In 1893, at the extraordinarily early age of eighteen, Clotilde Brewster was chosen to exhibit her work at the World's Columbian Exhibition in Chicago. In 1894, after a year of studying mathematics at Cambridge University, she apprenticed to the architect Reginald Blomfield in London for three years and completed her studies at the Royal Academy of Arts, from 1896 to 1899. Undaunted by the difficulties she might face as a woman in a man's profession, she relished the challenge of competing with the other sex. In 1899 she gave a speech at the International Congress of Women on the subject of architecture as a profession for women. Two years later she designed what is perhaps her greatest project, the Renaissance Revival style Palazzo Soderini overlooking the Piazza del Popolo in Rome. Her

buildings can be found in Italy, England, Russia, Germany, and France. Her commissions, built and unbuilt, include projects of urban palazzos, castles, fountains, mausoleums, chapels, additions and renovations. To date her work has never been catalogued.

Brewster's grandfather, Christopher Starr Brewster, was a dental surgeon from New York. A pioneer in the field of anesthesia, he amassed considerable wealth after a move to Paris and his introduction of diethyl ether to European dentistry. His patients included the elite of Europe – King Louis-Philippe, Emperor Louis Napoleon, and Empress Eugénie of France, as well as Tsar Nicholas I of Russia, who knighted him in 1842. Inheriting a fortune upon the death of Christopher Brewster, Clotilde's father, Henry Bennet ("H. B.") Brewster, was relieved of the necessity of earning a living and dedicated himself to literary and philosophical pursuits.

Clotilde's mother, née Julia von Stockhausen, was the daughter of Hanoverian diplomat and classical music aficionado Bodo von Stockhausen. She was an aristocrat through and through; aloof, sophisticated and cultured, she possessed impeccable manners, refined taste and a cool self-composure. Clotilde's grandmother, Baroness Clothilde von Stockhausen, was a patron of the arts and a pupil of composer Frédéric Chopin, who dedicated his Barcarolle in F major, Op. 60 to her.<sup>3</sup> But Julia had an anti-social streak; her outward calm masked an intense and complicated nature. Except for a few select friends, she shunned society and after her marriage in 1873 to H. B. Brewster she began in earnest "a life long pursuit of metaphysics and abstract disquisition."<sup>4</sup> For the first ten years of marriage the Brewsters lived in almost complete isolation in an apartment on via de' Bardi in Florence, eschewing worldly pleasures to study theology, philosophy and ancient languages. Into this esoteric world were born two children, Clotilde in 1874 and her brother Christopher in 1879.

A welcome intrusion into the Brewsters' solitary life was Adolf Hildebrand and his lover Irene Schäufelen. He was on the verge of a successful career as a sculptor and architect.<sup>5</sup> She rented an apartment on Via de' Bardi a floor above the Brewsters'. When the two couples met in 1873 it was the start of a great friendship that would span decades. Adolf Hildebrand soon purchased San Francesco di Paola, a former sixteenth-century convent on Bellosuardo Hill overlooking Florence. When the wealthy Irene eventually married Adolf, they created a home whose doors were open



The château of Avignonet. Author's collection.

to the cultural elite of Europe. Frequent visitors included German musicians and composers Richard Wagner and Clara Schumann, American novelist Henry James, and British politician Gerald Balfour. It was also a place where young Clotilde spent much of her time; first brought there by her mother or a governess, later she went by herself.

Sometime during the year of their son's birth, the Brewsters began to search for a home of their own. They had been renting a house each summer in the town of Claix, near Grenoble, situated in the dramatic setting of the Dauphiné Alps. In pursuit of a property in the area they would tour the resplendent nearby châteaux. These images stayed with Clotilde. At the end of 1880 they finally found a suitable estate called Château d'Avignonet, located between Grenoble and the ancient monastery town of Monestier-de-Clermont. It was built in the early seventeenth century, although it appears to have been remodeled in the neoclassical style first made popular in the mid-eighteenth century. H. B. Brewster spent a great deal of time arranging and supervising restoration of the château. Finally after two years of travelling back and forth from their apartment in Florence to Avignonet, their exquisitely decorated new home was almost ready.

But strangely, in January 1883, H. B. abruptly chose to leave, to go to Africa on a lion-hunting trip. There was more to his hasty departure than was readily apparent. At this time, the Brewsters were frequent hosts to a guest and friend of the family who would play a major role in their future lives. Music student Ethel Smyth was taking a sabbatical from her studies in Germany with Julia Brewster's brother-in-law, composer Heinrich von Herzogenberg. She had arrived in Florence sometime in December 1882 with letters of introduction and thereafter

spent a great deal of time with the Brewsters and Hildebrands. Ethel formed warm friendships with both Julia and H. B., but the latter began to develop a fondness stronger than just affection for their guest.<sup>6</sup> Even before this, letters between Clotilde's parents reveal that there were problems in their marriage.

Soon after Henry Brewster returned to Europe from Africa five months after his departure, he received a telegram informing him that Avignonet had been almost entirely destroyed by fire, the result of the negligence of one of the workmen restoring the château. The newspapers reported losses exceeding four hundred thousand francs. Insurance would cover only a fraction of the cost.

Ethel Smyth was there when the telegram arrived.

Just before I left Florence, news came that the Brewsters' château near Grenoble, a grand old pile made habitable by them at great expense, had been burned to the ground. Julia, the superwoman, was overwhelmed, and remained invisible for two or three days, but the bearing of H. B. was a revelation to me; he took it as one might take the loss of an old cigarette-holder.<sup>7</sup>

Ethel returned home as planned, but came back to Florence early in 1884 for an extended stay and renewed her acquaintance with the Brewsters. When she left this time, H. B. knew for certain that he was in love with her. He declared that he would not give her up, but Julia refused to condone a triangular relationship—sexual or platonic—as he had hoped. He left for France. Then in November 1885, after a year and a half of total separation, Julia and he met in Milan to sign a separation contract. Probably to his surprise, Ethel was horrified at the thought of having caused this rupture and broke off all contact with him. For the next six years H. B. led a nomadic existence that included two long stays in

New York, partly on family business.

The fire at the château d'Avignonet and the breakdown of the marriage, then, had taken place during the same short period. Associating the two events, Clotilde Brewster, still a young girl, strove to find a means to realize her dream of rebuilding Avignonet and thereby to reassemble her family; in her mind, the two goals were inextricably linked. Importantly, these events were to trigger her interest in building, which eventually led to her education and career in architecture.

A plaintive letter when Clotilde was only ten years old sets the tone and shows her conviction that somehow she could lead the way to a happy resolution to all the family's problems. An excerpt:

Are you never going to rebuild Avignonet? It is the most beautiful place I know. In summer the wind blows, and in winter the snow is deep; is there anything more charming than that. In any case I'm sending you a plan, what do you think of it?<sup>8</sup>

Though Clotilde did not know all the reasons until many years later, her father to whom she was enormously attached was gone. He had been a consistent presence in her life from birth until she was eight and, unlike the stereotypical Victorian father, he was actively involved, giving her lessons, sketching with her, engaging her in discussions and encouraging her to go where her interests and inclinations led. Their personalities were alike in many ways and when he left she felt the loss acutely. She believed that their family home was only a dream deferred and that Avignonet was to be restored. It was to become her *beau idéal*. She drew plans, elevations and sections; constructed models; read books on architecture; and discussed her designs with others. She composed persuasive arguments to rebuild in the mistaken belief that money was the only obstacle – a belief her father possibly reinforced. In the process her interest in architecture and building progressively grew.

I have just received your letter saying that a wood house costs 275 francs per square foot. This is a horror. But I have an idea! Don't get discouraged. We make the skeleton of the house in beautiful oak timbers or if that is too expensive another type of wood, then we fill between the skeleton with plaster, straw, small stones, lime, mortar and anything else leaving the dark wood timbers exposed...<sup>9</sup>

After she began to suspect that the estate was going to be sold, Clotilde sank into a state of despair. Her plans for a new Avignonet became more and more specific and even began to dominate her dreams. She conveyed her worries and the restoration plans for the house with astonishing clarity to H. B., when she was almost thirteen:

During the night I had an idea that I want to share with you. The idea is for Avignonet because all the houses, and all the châteaux that I design – I depict them only at Avignonet, and the beautiful allée where it is found. The idea that prevented me from sleeping is to build the house entirely of wood. You will say, 'There is the danger of fire,' we will insure it at a very high price, and will have a fire pump. The house would be of horizontal beams, one on top of the other, and at the four corners there would be perpendicular posts...

We would not have architect, or contractor; we would have a carpenter, a blacksmith and some other laborers. The only difficulty would be to take the measure of beams and boards etc. but once this difficulty is overcome, it would be fine...<sup>10</sup>

The summer months were spent with the entire family together, H. B. included, in a rented house in Switzerland. At some point during that time it was agreed that Clotilde should be tutored by a professional architect. Julia turned to the Hildebrands for advice, and that fall Swiss architect Emanuel La Roche was engaged as her "*maitre d'architecture*." It was still early in his career but he would later go on to design with Emil Faesch the magnificent Basel railway station and other important buildings; he had been invited to Florence in 1887 to collaborate on Heinrich von Geymüller's monumental work *The Architecture of the Renaissance in Tuscany* and in time he would join Adolf Hildebrand's architectural staff.

For Mr. La Roche I have at least four hours of preparation! ...I just finished my third drawing; it is a cone intersected by a cylinder: the section, plan and elevation. Yesterday I drew a six-sided pyramid whose top was removed and intersected by a five-sided cylinder...Mr. La Roche says if I do a small amount of geometry in space afterwards I will know how to do the sections of houses. Soon we are going to study the different styles and after we will do houses in perspective and some plans.<sup>11</sup>

Clotilde Brewster's path to the profession of architecture, then, depended upon a unique set of circumstances and people. Of these, Irene and Adolf Hildebrand were perhaps the most important; through Clotilde's family's close association with this extraordinary couple she was able to transfer her fantasy of recreating Avignonet into a real objective–learning to be an architect.

In 1892 Clotilde was at a crossroad in her life. Her mother's health had deteriorated to such an extent that plans were made to leave Florence permanently to live with H. B. in Rome. Clotilde was eager to begin a new life as a pupil of a British architect as well; England at the time was the epicenter of the women's rights movement in Europe and promised an easier path into the profession for women. Her father, working behind the scenes, sought advice from Agnes Garrett who together with her cousin Rhoda Garrett formed the first female interior design firm in Britain.<sup>12</sup> In the late 1860s, the Garretts wanted to train as architects but had "much difficulty in finding an office open to a lady pupil."<sup>13</sup> They trained instead with Daniel Cottier, a decorator, furnisher and glass-stainer in London.<sup>14</sup>

Agnes Garrett thought Clotilde needed to wait before joining an architect's office because of her youth but suggested that she submit an original work to the Chicago World's Fair. It was, as H. B. wrote to his daughter, "a way to introduce yourself to the world and can be a good opportunity."<sup>15</sup> Garrett believed in a strong female presence at the Fair and the numerous women in the Garrett clan were represented in the British exhibits.<sup>16</sup>

That summer, determined to not to interrupt her architectural studies during the family stay in Nyon, Switzerland, Clotilde travelled to Geneva a few times a week to the office of Jacques-Elisée Goss (1839-1921), a well-

respected and prolific architect whose principal works were the Geneva Opera House, the Hôtel National and the headquarters of watchmakers Patek-Philippe.<sup>17</sup> He set aside a sitting room with a drafting table for Clotilde's exclusive use. By November and still in Goss's office, she completed six pen-and-ink drawings of a villa to submit to the Woman's Building at the World's Fair – which, by a curious coincidence, Ethel Smyth's music was to inaugurate. As the Brewster's owned property in Manhattan, Clotilde must have submitted her drawings through the New York Board of Women Managers who were in charge of procuring the best items to be exhibited from their state.<sup>18</sup>

The Woman's Building at the Fair celebrated women's progress through the ages and showcased the products of their industry whether in fine art, crafts or literature. Only some fourteen women were active in architecture in the United States in 1893 (and less than half that number in all of Europe); five were chosen to exhibit their work in the Woman's Building: Sophia Hayden, Lois Lilley Howe, Minerva Parker Nichols, Anna Cobb—and eighteen-year-old Clotilde Brewster.

The routes women could take to become an architect at this time were few. They could attend one of the architecture programs at the few universities that had recently begun to admit them. Or if one had an architect in the family who thought it appropriate for women to enter into the profession he might provide some training, give encouragement and use his connections. It was also possible to enter the profession through the building trades if one had enough money to build speculative houses and an interest in studying architectural books and journals on one's own. Finally, if the woman was quite wealthy, private tutors could sometimes be found. Those university programs that admitted women provided an alternative to traditional male paths to becoming an architect such as apprenticeship to a carpenter or working in an established architect's office ) these routes were generally closed to women).

The paths followed by the other four female architects exhibiting in Chicago in 1893 illustrate some of the variations. Sophia Hayden (1868-1953), from an old Massachusetts family, was the first woman to be accepted to the four year architecture program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and obtained her degree in 1890; she won the nationwide architectural competition for the Woman's Building, which was based on her thesis project. Lois Lilley Howe (1864-1964), also from a well-to-do Massachusetts family, was Hayden's MIT studio mate but

enrolled in a special two-year program; the runner-up in the competition for the Woman's Building, she went on to form an all-female architectural practice. Having a family member in the architecture profession enabled Minerva Parker Nichols (1860-1949) to pursue her design studies and follow in her grandfather's footsteps; in 1893 she was the only woman to run a solo architectural practice in America. The career of Anna Cobb (1830-1911), the oldest of the four, represents one of the very few ways women of her earlier generation could become architects; a hard-working real estate speculator from an impoverished but respectable family, she made the crucial transition from constructing homes based on plans from carpenter books to designing houses herself.

At the same time, on the advice of H. B. who thought that mathematics would give her a solid base for a career in architecture, Clotilde took the entrance exams for Cambridge University, in June of 1893. Passing with flying colors, she spent a year studying Descriptive Geometry for Engineers; Static and Dynamic Mechanics; and Differential Calculus.<sup>19</sup> Finally, in the summer of 1894, she and her father searched for an architect's office where she could further her training. They sought out Richard Norman Shaw, whose work had enormously influenced

architecture in England and in America and was instrumental in creating and popularizing what is today known as the Queen Anne style. Shaw used his influence and Clotilde was articled for three years to up-and-coming architect Reginald Blomfield at a cost of £135 per year, the equivalent to £12,734 in current value.

Before the official start of her internship in October, Blomfield asked Clotilde to measure and draw buildings in Freiburgim Breisgau, Germany where she was summering. Blomfield was quite impressed with her drawings including one of the Kaufhaus, a late Gothic merchant's hall. Clotilde began life in the office by learning to draft in the English manner and by March 1895 she was working on a large sheet of elevations with a plan and section of a house that Blomfield had

remodeled to submit to the Royal Academy. Like the other pupils in Blomfield's office, Clotilde was encouraged to go to the South Kensington Museum, sketchbook in hand, and study the architectural models and plaster casts on display. Before work each day she read books on building construction and her Saturdays were spent visiting the old buildings and churches of London. Friends of her father opened their doors to her so she could measure and draw their house decorations, woodwork and mantelpieces.

Clotilde proudly wrote her father that Blomfield said to



Siegfried Fountain by Adolf von Hildebrand. Author's collection.

everyone who asked him “how his new lady pupil was getting on” that she “worked twice as well and as much as any other pupil he has ever had.”<sup>20</sup> Clotilde’s projects after her apprenticeship at Blomfield’s were impressive. As usual even for male architects of that day, she received commissions from various relatives, such as the mausoleum in the form of a tempietto in Menton, France designed for her cousin Ellen Joubert Hearn and a villa in Rome for her New York cousin Anne Seabury Brewster.

Clotilde actually had one advantage over men with respect to one particular type of patron; certain wealthy women who were advocates of women’s rights and equality were eager for her services. Dr. Lillias Hamilton, Scottish pioneer physician and author, hired Clotilde to convert a London townhouse into a “hospital.” For her cousin Anne’s sister-in-law Countess Marianna Soderini and Anne’s mother-in-law Alessandra de Frankenstein, Clotilde designed abutting palazzos in Rome. Both mother and daughter were involved in the Italian women’s rights movement and founded several charitable institutions. Alessandra de Frankenstein also

commissioned Clotilde to design the façade for a new building to house the Laboratorio Santa Caterina in Rome, a communal house and cooperative for impoverished female workers and their families. The American-born Countess Ada Telfener asked Clotilde to help her create a faux-

medieval castle on top of ruins in Perugia, now called the Castello dell’Oscano. There was also mention of her designing an Italian National Theatre to showcase Eleanora Duse, the most famous actress of her day.<sup>21</sup> The theatre was to be built on Lake Albano near Rome on land donated by Henri de Frankenstein, who proposed Clotilde Brewster as architect, and Duse, “who would like to see woman occupy positions other than those of fond dalliance...jumped at the suggestion.”<sup>22</sup> Clotilde produced designs and drawings, but the theatre was never built.

To build her palazzo, Contessa Marianna Soderini found an attractive site facing the ancient Piazza del Popolo. This oval-shaped square is home to many architectural treasures, such as the Flaminio obelisk, the Valadier fountains and the twin churches of Santa Maria di Montesanto and Santa Maria dei Miracoli. Looking west, the Palazzo Soderini forms a visual edge enclosing the piazza. Though the palazzo’s height, massing and materials had to conform to the urban context of the neighborhood, Brewster

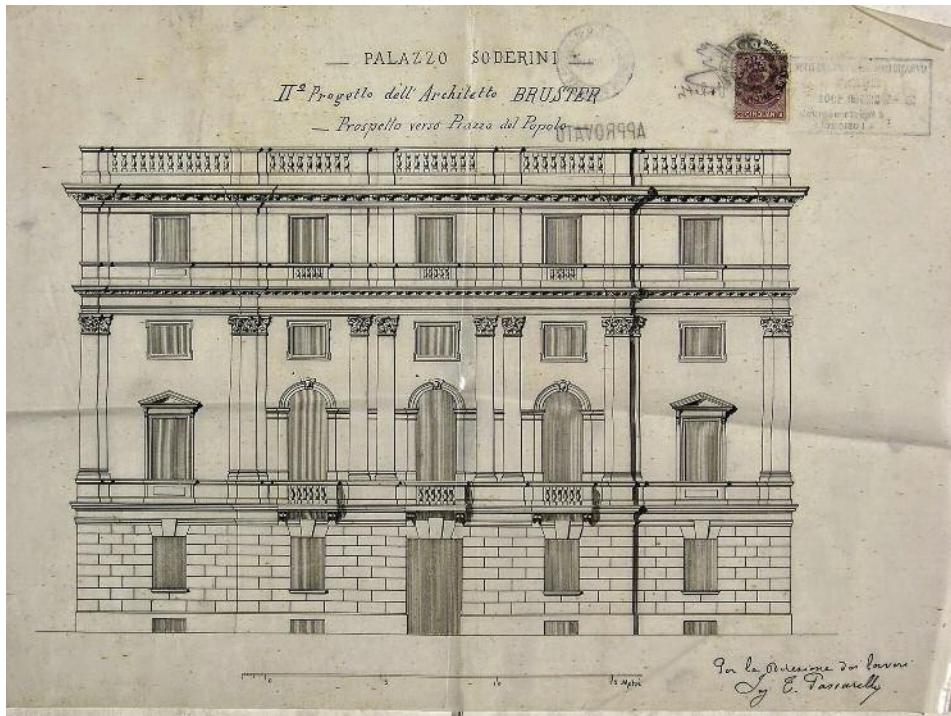
used elements to add depth and shadow to the skin of the building animating the facade. The ground floor is heavily rusticated with angled grooves between the blocks; window and doors openings are topped by flat arches of oversized masonry and dropped keystones. The massive door is



Starr Brewster, Hearn Mausoleum. Author's collection.



View of Piazza del Popolo. Palazzo Soderini is the first structure to the left of the obelisk. St. Peters Basilica can be seen in the distance.



Drawing from the 1901 building permit set. Collection of the Ricotti family, Rome.

composed of deeply carved wooden panels. There is a weighty horizontal feel to this level in contrast to the verticality of the lofty piano nobile above.

The drawings that accompany the building permit show an original design composition of the piano nobile different from what was actually built. Two window types are used on the elevation facing the piazza. The visual focus is on a shallow projected central bay with three full length arched windows with balconies. The bay is then framed by two simpler rectangular windows with pediments. There is liberal use of layered pilasters articulating the sections. As built, the hierarchy of a central bay is gone – producing a design which though simpler is perhaps a better choice for a corner building with two facades.<sup>23</sup> The piano nobile retains its elegant proportions and the arched full length windows repeat along its entire length. The composite order pilasters and the modillion cornice lend a sculptural element to the composition. The composite order was a perfect choice for a palace designed for a woman; with its leafy capital and curved volutes, this order was considered feminine and used in many Renaissance churches dedicated to the Virgin Mary and female saints.

Clotilde's father, though absent through most of her childhood, frequently supported and promoted her career by hosting dinner parties for her, introducing her to influential people, seeking advice from experts and acting as go-between, in Italy and as well as in England. After he renewed his affair with Ethel Smyth in the early 1890s, Clotilde entered her social circle. There the young architect met women who became her clients, including Lady Mary Ponsonby, former lady-in-waiting to Queen Victoria and an early promoter of women's rights. Ethel Smyth's sisters Mary and Violet and their husbands were repeat customers: Mary and Charles Hunter hired Clotilde for various work on Selaby, County Durham, including a new entrance addition

to the Hall, a lodge, stables and racquet court, gardener's house and entrance gate piers; Violet and Richard Hippisley hired her to design the Boer War memorial fountain in Farnborough, Hampshire.<sup>24</sup> Clotilde's new addition to Selaby Hall transformed a drab country manor into a châteauesque residence.

But Clotilde's life would soon take a new turn. During her internship at Blomfield's office she had met Percy Feilding, a fellow apprentice. He cut quite a figure, and his lineage was socially impeccable (his maternal grandfather was the third Marquis of Bath; his paternal grandfather was the seventh Earl of Denbigh). Feilding had begun his architecture training in Blomfield's office a number of years after obtaining a law degree from Balliol College, Oxford University, in 1891.

Feilding the new pupil, is 7 feet tall, has a large thin nose, lines at the corners of his mouth, neither beard nor mustache—very smart—around 25 years old. He is from the beau monde. It was Thomas who got him a place here. He takes up architecture as a hobby and knows *nothing*—to the great joy of us all. Right now he copies my drawings! He traces them I mean. I'm in clover. The four of them (male apprentices) strive to make themselves useful to me—light the gas for me – lend me brushes. God what a life!<sup>25</sup>

Clotilde felt a strong attraction for Feilding but doubted his seriousness. Percy was somewhat cavalier about his apprenticeship, showing up at the office only sporadically. He declined to take the exam for the Royal Academy (as did Clotilde and two other of Blomfield's pupils). In 1904 Percy Feilding eventually asked Clotilde to marry him – if not until almost ten years after they first met and then only after much hesitation; they went on to have two children, a son and a daughter. From the first, Clotilde outshone Percy in talent and in personality. She had her own income and was quite different from the typical English women of his acquaintance. Feilding's commissions were modest, consisting of designing cottages and redoing old buildings. Although lacking proficient drafting skills, he was very competent in renovation and construction. It is notable that his only projects published were ones he did in collaboration with Clotilde: Pekes Manor House and its gardens (see below), published in *Some of the Smaller Manor Houses of Sussex* by Viscountess Wolseley, 1925; Stonehill House published in *Country Life* in 1923; and Beckley Park, also published in *Country life*, in 1929.

In January of 1908 Clotilde wrote her father that she and Percy had received a large commission from his friend the Hon. Terence Bourke, and that she was working very seriously on it. Bourke was the son of the sixth Earl of Mayo,



(L to R): Palazzo Soderini. Detail of Composite Order capital and modillion cornice. Courtesy Mario Tonucci. Selby Hall, new east entrance. Durham County Archives.

Viceroy of India. As a young man he became entranced by the Near East and settled near Bizerta, Tunisia. When his wife's health started to fail in 1907, he purchased Pekes, a dilapidated fifteenth-century house and an attached farm in Chiddingly, East Sussex. The project involved an extensive restoration of the house including the addition of an entry porch, an L-shaped Edwardian wing, schoolhouse, principal entrance gates and lodge; new landscaping including walled gardens, the creation of the front drive across the parkland and opposite the manor the brick balustrade with pedestals surmounted by statues overlooking the pond.

Traces of Italy appear throughout the new Pekes Manor work. One of the main characteristics of Italian garden design is to merge a number of architectural features with the landscape; examples abound at Pekes most especially in its Colonnade Garden. To the side of the main house was built an "Edwardian wing." At one story high and one room deep, it reads as part of the arrangement forming the Colonnade Garden rather than an addition to the house. It is further enclosed by a row of brick pillars and garden walls. An exedra, the curved architectural element frequently used in Italian landscape design, is set in the rear wall and shaded by overhanging boughs of trees. It terminates an axis created by a broad path cutting through the garden from the door of the wing. Through the colonnade can be seen a grove of trees beyond. The entire composition created an artful transition from the rigid forms of architecture to the flowing shapes of nature.

At the entrance of Pekes are towering pillars capped by stone balls and flanked by brick walls into which circular windows or oculi have been inserted.<sup>26</sup> These are reminiscent of a number of villa entryways in Italy, for instance at the Villa Roncioni in Pugnano. The estate is filled with other remarkable architectural gems such as a circular oast house converted by the Feildings into a summer residence for Lady Mayo, Bourke's mother.<sup>27</sup> A number of Italian Renaissance medallions were fitted onto the brick surface.<sup>28</sup> Over the entry door is one of a Madonna and Child surrounded by putti by Andrea Della Robbia and a second medallion is a lovely tondo portrait of a lady

attributed to Luca Della Robbia; these medallions announced, in effect, that this structure was the domain of an estimable mother and noblewoman.

In 1911, after completion of Pekes Manor, the Feildings purchased a property for themselves called Stonehill, near Chiddingly village – a half-timbered medieval house, "all huge oak beams and plaster," wrote Clotilde. In an even more tumble-down state than Pekes was, it was a suitable candidate for the wrecking ball. This did not deter Clotilde, who wrote about their new home in glowing terms and sent a sketch which already envisioned the construction of the projected bay window on the ground floor and the restored arched entryway:

Percy's friend Logan Pearsall Smith paints quite a different picture of the house:

On my way back I stopped to lunch with the Feildings. They live in an ancient and picturesque cottage or small farm-house, in discomfort which is almost squalor. There is something primitive in Clotilde – she is sort of a German *Urweib*, and she has reverted to nature and manures and Sussex soil with enthusiasm and complete abandonment, but Percy makes an odd farm-labourer, and I think he is sick of it all.<sup>29</sup>

The use of the German word *Urweib* is telling. It originally referred to a primitive woman, a Teutonic amazon, who fought alongside men. By the turn of the



Pekes Manor with Edwardian wing on the right. Courtesy Eva Morris.



(L to R): Entry gates with oculi at The Lodge, Chiddingly. The Oast House. Courtesy Eva Morris.

twentieth century the term was used derisively, for instance, to mock women in the suffragette movement; they were portrayed as transgressing gender roles, wearing mannish clothes and comically competing with men. Pearsall Smith no doubt saw Clotilde as dominating Percy, his former comrade-in-arms and youthful fellow adventurer.

Clotilde—though always ladylike—rose above gender stereotypes in a most spectacular way. And whether *Urweib* or not, she took on challenges most people would run from. She took in hand the renovations and transformation of Stonehill from ramshackle hovel into an enchanting gem, creating a picturesque setting with walled gardens and extensive terracing. Clotilde and Percy also knew how to create dramatic interior settings:

We have brought the carved cassone into the entrance and hung Arthur's red brocatelle over it. It looks stunning with the gilt looking glass you gave me hanging over it. You would not recognize the house. It looks elegant and theatrical, no longer humble and sordid.<sup>31</sup>

Clotilde's use of the word "theatrical" was prophetic. The restored house and gardens so charmed playwright J. M. Barrie that when he saw it in 1920 he impulsively offered to buy it from the Feildings—and they accepted. Barrie intended it as a gift for his twenty year old ward Michael Llewelyn Davies, who along with his four brothers was the

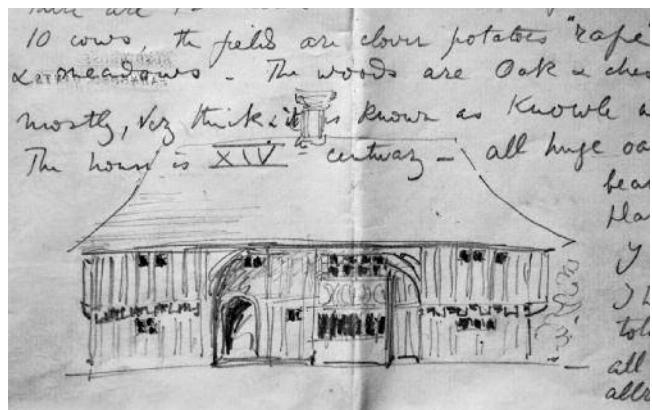


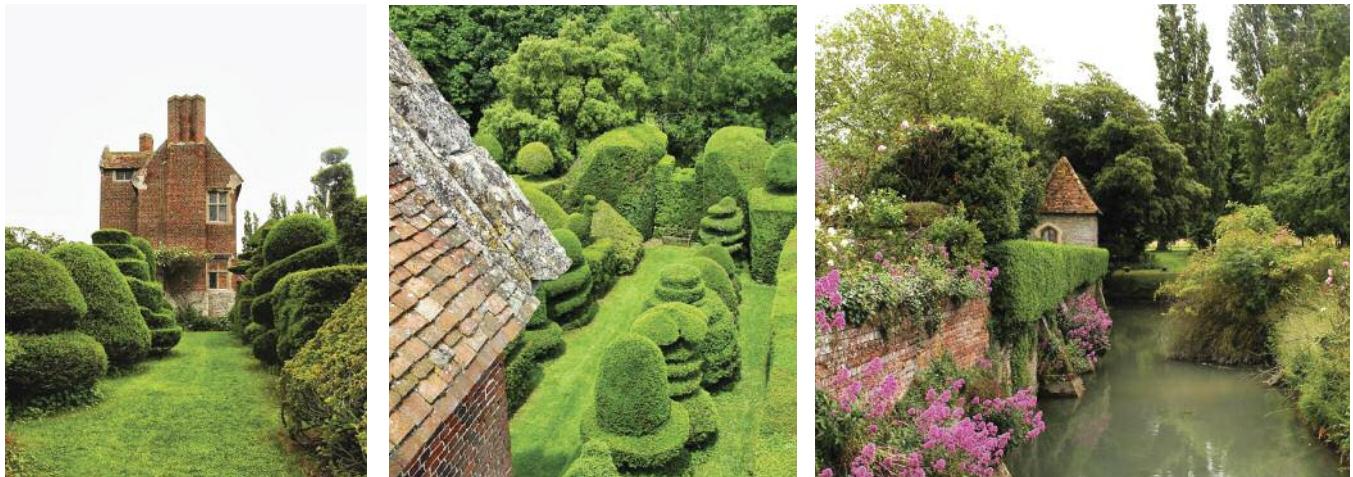
(L to R): Stonehill, at time of purchase. 1911 sketch of Stonehill by Clotilde in a letter to her brother Christopher. Brewster family collection.

inspiration for the characters in Barrie's *Peter Pan*. Michael perhaps had other ideas, as the property quickly was passed back to the Feildings. Sometime during 1921 or 1922 the house was again, and finally, sold.

By this time the Feildings were already busy restoring another ancient property, sixteenth-century Beckley Park in Oxfordshire and creating the extraordinary topiary gardens that still flourish there. An ancient moat surrounds the property, and at one of its corners is a pavilion designed by Clotilde.<sup>32</sup> Interestingly, it bears an uncanny resemblance to a similarly placed pavilion at the Château de Longpra, which Clotilde must have visited since it is very near Avignonet. Further, the materials used at Beckley mimic the ones used at an entry tower at Avignonet. In these elements, Clotilde Brewster—knowingly or unknowingly—left a tribute to that long-ago time in her childhood when her architectural interest and talent had first begun to bud.

Beckley would be Clotilde Brewster's last architectural project. After Percy Feilding died in 1929, she turned into a sort of recluse, becoming quite overweight and allowing smoking and drinking to undermine both her looks and her health. She died in 1937. Beckley Park, which she loved, remains in the family.





(L to R): Beckley Park topiaries and moat pavilion. Photos by Laura Fitzmaurice.

### Notes

1. "Nota mondana," *La Vita Italiana, Rivista Illustrata*, Angelde Gubernatis, ed., vol. 6, Feb.-Apr. 1896: 191-92. Translated from the Italian by Starr Brewster.
2. Clotilde's parents were visiting Fontainebleau at the time of her birth.
3. Baroness von Stockhausen, née Clothilde Gräfin von Baudissin (1818-1891).
4. Harry Brewster, *The Cosmopolites: a Nineteenth Century Family Drama* (Norwich, UK: Michael Russell Publishing, 1994), 259.
5. Adolf von Hildebrand is known primarily as a sculptor but his later architectural commissions were numerous.
6. The triangular relationship between Julia, H.B. and Ethel is described in Ethel Smyth's own memoirs and is the subject of the book *The Cosmopolites: a Nineteenth Century Family Drama* by their grandson Harry Brewster.
7. Ethyl Smith, *Impressions That Remained: Memoirs* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), 320.
8. Letter from Clotilde, age 10, to her father, 30 July 1885. All letters between Clotilde and her father were written in French. I have translated the excerpts used in this article. Letters from Clotilde to her brother Christopher were written in English.
9. Letter from Clotilde, age 12, to her father, 1 April 1887.
10. Letter from Clotilde, age 12, to her father, 19 October 1887.
11. Letter from Clotilde, age 14, to her father, 22 November 1888.
12. Rhoda Garrett had been in a romantic relationship with Ethel Smyth in the early 1880s. After Rhoda's early death in 1882, Agnes Garrett remained a good friend of Ethel's.
13. *Englishwoman's Review*, 15 December 1882, p. 548. Quoted in Emma Ferry, "Decorators May Be Compared to Doctors: An Analysis of Rhoda and Agnes Garrett's 'Suggestions for House Decoration in Painting, Woodwork and Furniture'" (1876) published in *Design History Journal*, vol. 16, no. 1 (2003).
14. Through their connection to Cottier the Garrett cousins did eventually manage to train in the office of John MacKean Brydon, thus becoming the first women in Great Britain to formally apprentice to an architect. They did not however practice architecture after their internships ended remaining "house decorators" throughout their lives.
15. Letter from H.B. to Clotilde, 15 May 1892.
16. The British exhibits featured two of Agnes's sisters, Millicent Garrett-Fawcett, a founder of Newnham College and president of the International Council of Women, and Dr. Elizabeth Garrett-Anderson, the first female to qualify as a physician and surgeon in Britain, as well as her niece, Philippa Garrett-Fawcett, a mathematician and educator. A handmade carpet by her late cousin and business partner Rhoda was also put on display.
17. The Hôtel National is now called the Palais Wilson.
18. Clotilde is listed in the *World's Columbian Exposition, 1893, Official Catalogue* as being from New York.
19. A letter from Newnham College in the Brewster archives reveal that Clotilde only intended to study at Cambridge for a short time. She completed her year there successfully.
20. Letter from Clotilde to her father, 25 November 1894.
21. Eleanora Duse (1858-1924), most famous Italian actress of her time, known also for her romantic relationship with playwright Gabriele D'Annunzio
22. Letter from H. B. to Ethel Smyth, February 1897, quoted in Harry Brewster, *The Cosmopolites...*, p. 297.
23. The palazzo as built represents a return to an earlier scheme.
24. Selaby Hall and its park were on long term lease from Lord Barnard.
25. Letter from Clotilde to her father, 27 October 1894. Percy was well over six feet tall; he towered over Clotilde but seven feet was an exaggeration.
26. These oculi were converted to pedestrian archways at a later date.
27. An oast house was a conical or pyramidal shaped building for drying hops.
28. At a later date tile shingles would partially cover the surface of the oast-house.
29. Letter from Logan Pearsall Smith to his sister Mary Berenson, wife of art historian Bernard Berenson, 25 October 1913. Houghton Library, Harvard University.
30. Letters reveal that Clotilde paid for the entire Stonehill project from her own funds.
31. Ibid.
32. Clotilde's husband was not involved in the design of the pavilion according to Amanda Feilding, their granddaughter and present owner of Beckley Park.

• ACECROFT • HALL •  
• LANCASHIRE •



Agecroft Hall, Lancashire, as illustrated in Henry Taylor's *Old Halls in Lancashire and Cheshire*, 1884.

# The Manor Reborn:

## SALVAGED ENGLISH TUDOR HOUSES RECONSTRUCTED IN AMERICA

JENNIFER CARLQUIST

A British film titled *The Ghost Goes West* parodied the adventures of a wealthy American family who buys a Scottish Tudor castle (and its ancestral ghost) and reconstructs it in Florida.<sup>1</sup> After the castle's ancestral owner sets his price at several thousands below what the American had expected to pay, a conversation follows:

American: "Well that's pretty steep, but I'll take it.  
When can we start tearing it down?"

Scottish heir: "Tearing what down?"

American: "Why, the whole works! We're going to crate it up, stone by stone, panel by panel, and ship it to America!"

By the time the film was released in 1935, the idea of an American industrialist returning from Europe with an entire castle as a souvenir was already cliché. In reality, *English Tudor* (alternatively called "Elizabethan" or "Jacobean" in the early twentieth century) was the architecture of choice for this purpose. It represented hand-hewn quality and a romanticized, rural past. Tudor Revivalists could even claim an element of patriotism in the style, citing George Washington's ancestral home, Sulgrave Manor, which still stands in Northamptonshire. The style represented the centuries-old prosperity of England's landed gentry, rather than the aristocracy. Its vernacular irregularity lent itself to endless adaptation by American architects and their patrons.<sup>2</sup>

Countless American buildings from the 1890s to 1930s imitated and adapted Tudor elements. The grandest Tudor Revival houses, such as George Allen's Castle Glynallen (Morristown, NJ, 1913-17), William Robertson Coe's Planting Fields estate (Oyster Bay, NY built 1918-21), Clarence Mackenzie Lewis's Skylands (Ringwood, NJ, 1922-24), and Carl Weeks's Salisbury House (Des Moines, IA, 1923-28), incorporated antique architectural elements from Europe. John Harris's ground-breaking 2007 book, *Moving Rooms: The Trade in Architectural Salvages*, discussed the trade in elements from the roughly 700 country and manor houses demolished in England in the first half of the 20th century. Elements from a fraction of those demolitions made their way to American houses, museums, or other institutions. Harris briefly mentions a category of salvages that has received less attention than imported rooms and interior fragments – entire Tudor structures dismantled in England, then imported into the United States.

Best known among this small group are a complementary pair bought in England in 1925 and reconstructed on adjacent estates in the aptly-named Windsor Farms neighborhood of Richmond, Virginia.

Agecroft Hall was built in 1926-28 and celebrated as a reconstruction of a Tudor manor house from Lancashire possibly begun in the late fifteenth century. The original structure, called *Edgecroft*, not Agecroft, was unoccupied and in a state of disrepair before being auctioned in 1925. The buyer was American architect Henry Grant Morse and his client, Thomas C. Williams, Jr., a tobacco heir and banker.<sup>3</sup>

Williams "had no intention of replicating Edgecroft as it had stood in Lancashire."<sup>4</sup> He made use of salvaged timbers, window casements and leaded panes, the stone roof, courtyard gates, and interior woodwork (dating from fifteenth to seventeenth centuries), as well as a sandstone foundation removed from Edgecroft and other structures. As with most American versions of this house type, Agecroft's timbers are decorative rather than load-bearing. The house has steel-reinforced, masonry walls that are stuccoed to imitate wattle-and-daub. Edgecroft had four wings surrounding a central courtyard. The rebuilt house is roughly one-third the size, with a series of irregular wings.<sup>5</sup> Today, Agecroft Hall functions as a museum with the unique mission of interpreting fifteenth- to seventeenth -century England.

Agecroft also includes elements from Warwick Priory, a Tudor house acquired by Williams's neighbors immediately to the east—Virginia House, designed by the same architect, Henry Morse, and built 1925-1928 for Ambassador to



Salvages from Agecroft, on their way to Richmond, 1926.  
Courtesy Agecroft Hall, The Agecroft Association.



Virginia House, Richmond c. 1927. Note the forms of Warwick Priory's gables, reconfigured at center. Courtesy Virginia Historical Society.

Mexico Alexander Weddell and his wife, interior designer Virginia Weddell. Morse acquired for them the sixteenth- and seventeenth- century Warwick Priory in Warwickshire. The sale sparked objections in England, where the public, press, and even Parliament debated whether England's architectural heritage should be sold, dismantled, and exported to America. A member of the House of Representatives COMMONS??? labeled the sale to the Weddells as an "act of vandalism."<sup>6</sup> The Weddells claimed that their primary motivation in buying the Priory was their "determination to rescue" it.<sup>7</sup> Alexander Weddell appears to have convinced British critics that his acquiring and transporting the house—even if to America—was preferable to allowing it to decay further.

No matter the sincerity of their appreciation for the original priory, the Weddells treated the house as a collection of building materials. Its sale catalogue confirms that this was a standard view of historic demolitions, itemizing the house's "rare old oak doors, large quantity of floor boards, the whole of the joists and other timbers, and enormous quantities of excellent sandstone, old Oak and other Beams and Timbers, Girders, and c."<sup>8</sup>

The most literal recreation of Warwick Priory is found in Virginia House's central bays with Flemish gables. The east wing was designed with both new and antique elements after the Spencer-Churchill family's Wormleighton Manor, also in Warwickshire. The west wing was designed to evoke Sulgrave Manor, of George Washington fame. Interior paneling, windows, fireplaces, and other elements were recycled from various sources in England and Europe, or designed to look as though they were.

In fact, Americans had already been importing entire English houses a decade earlier. John Harris cites a "complete L-shaped half-timbered house with a date of 1563, removed from Ipswich" as the earliest example.<sup>9</sup> In 1908 it was sold by the firm Gill & Reigate, one of the many

London dealers specializing in architectural salvages by 1900. Its eventual location or fate in America is unknown.

The taste for Tudor was spread in part by several British-born dealer-decorators with firms based in London and New York: Charles \_\_\_\_ Is there a name missing here??? of London; Lenyon and Morant; and Arthur S. Vernay. In 1913, Vernay built The Croft, a country house near Ossining, New York, that survives as a testament to his involvement in the salvage trade. The New York Herald described the house as "probably the first completely antique Tudor house which was ever been constructed in America...Every particle of material used in the structure once formed a part of some ancient English dwelling."<sup>10</sup> Some of Vernay's antique materials came from an unnamed source in "the county of Worcester." Of particular note were the elements Vernay managed to acquire from Compton Wynates, perhaps the most visited and widely published example of Tudor



Warwick Priory, Warwickshire, c. 1900. Courtesy Virginia Historical Society.

architecture.<sup>11</sup> Located in Warwickshire, Compton Wynates is still owned and occupied by the Marquis of Northampton. The house has been altered many times in its history, at times gaining, as well as losing salvaged materials.<sup>12</sup> Around 1913, renovations provided George Allen of Morristown the opportunity to obtain some interior paneling for his Castle Glynnallen (modeled after Compton Wynates), and may have allowed Vernay to acquire his Compton Wynates salvages.<sup>13</sup>

Vernay appears to have set the standard followed by the Virginia Tudor houses, commissioning measured drawings of original structures, then reconfiguring the salvaged elements to suit modern taste and needs. With the help of architects Forster & Carretto, and Scottish-born builders Forrest & Muir, Vernay assembled his salvages in The Croft, a relatively compact, near-symmetrical structure.

Gustav Stickley's *The Craftsman* featured many examples of Tudor Revival throughout its run. In 1916 it singled out The Croft for special notice:

The round valleys, lead hips and window frames, carved balcony rails, heavy timbers, in fact, almost every feature of this house, is a masterpiece of English workmanship, yet the art of its assembling makes it look eminently suitable and at home in this American setting. Ivy now covers the stone walls and helps convey the impression of long standing and use not often seen in a newly constructed building.<sup>14</sup>

It is virtually impossible to identify the many sources that contributed to The Croft. *The Craftsman* article admired, but did not identify them:

Nearly all of the material of this house is genuinely old, having been removed from an old English castle...The bargeboards of the gable, belt courses and brackets were elaborately and beautifully carved many years ago and well weathered by England's suns and storms. The brick and the mottled tile of the roof, all over three hundred years of age, were transported from the land of fine castles...The lead sash and glass panes, in fact, the whole window, was brought over from England...The hall is unlike anything of its kind in America, for it is substantially English. The oak balcony, one beam of which weighed twelve hundred pounds, was brought over bodily from England, as were all the exposed timbers; balcony rails are ancient Gothic carvings of the early fifteenth century...<sup>15</sup>

Vernay warned against taking too "academic" an approach to decorating in a 1927 publication titled *Decorations and English Interiors*. Charm and harmony, Vernay argued, are "not obtained by adhering closely to 'periods' but by a judicious choice of pieces that harmonize, even where a definite period effect, such as Jacobean or Georgian wall paneling, serves as the basis of a room."<sup>16</sup> He followed this practice in his dealings with private clients as well as museums. Most notably among his period room transactions was the paneling said to be removed from Higham Manor in Suffolk. Sold in 1919 to the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, it is the oldest surviving installation of an English period room in an American museum. The paneling was stripped of its "dark yellow" paint, cut down, reconfigured, and the room given a new ceiling and floor, according to then-prevailing practice.<sup>17</sup>

Vernay maintained his weekend retreat for only a few years before selling The Croft to Daniel R. Hanna, a wealthy businessman originally from Cleveland. It passed through several hands and was recently acquired for its surrounding

acres of wilderness by the Teatown Lake Reservation.<sup>18</sup>

Another "imported" Tudor house was brought to the United States in 1916 by a much more surprising source – the Manhattan branch of Wanamaker's department store. The store sold antiques on its fourth floor, in a department grandly titled "Au Quatrième, the House of Antiquity." The department's founding manager was Nancy McClelland, who was to become one of America's most respected antiquarian-decorators. Wanamaker's allowed her complete autonomy in choosing the antiques for her department. This required the enviable task of frequent trips to Europe.

In 1916 McClelland spent six months touring with her assistant, Ruby Ross Goodnow (better known as Ruby Ross Wood).<sup>19</sup> They sailed into New York's harbor aboard the *SS St. Louis* with an assortment of furniture, textiles, and *objets d'art*, including Windsor chairs, Jacobean cupboards and tables, a pair of lacquered Venetian secretaries, and the contents of an eighteenth-century Roman ballroom. While abroad, they also acquired a "Fine Georgian Paneled Room" from London, a "Jacobean Oak Paneled Room" from Norfolk, and several English mantels and chimneypieces.

One acquisition that proved challenging for Wanamaker's was that of an entire Tudor cottage, described in a catalogue as follows:

#### Goatley Farm

An original Tudor House built in 1470. It stood at Ashford, Kent, and is characteristic of the construction and methods of building in the County of Kent, with the Hall in the center rising clear to the roof, and rooms on two floors at each end of the Hall. The tiles, the hand carved beams, the doors, window frames the outside half timbers and the mantel pieces which were put in the House in the XVI. Century have all been brought to

America, together with the scale drawings of the original house, which will enable an architect to set it up as a week-end or guest house on a large country place. Portions of the House are shown in the store with a complete model made to scale, and the scale drawings. The price of the House in its present condition is \$25,000.<sup>20</sup>



Arthur S. Vernay's The Croft, near Ossining, NY.  
*The Craftsman*, 1916.

Fireplaces, paneling, decorative carvings, and other "Architectural Antiques" from Europe were already standard offerings in New York's expanding antiques trade. "Goatley Farm" arrived in four shipments totaling 400 cases of materials "from cellar stones to roofing."<sup>21</sup>

Every case was opened and examined by U.S. Customs, whose agents had great difficulty determining how to evaluate their contents. According to one newspaper account, customs officials "who are accustomed in their daily routine to examine and appraise everything from a paper of pins to an elephant, confessed their surprise" at being asked to evaluate an entire historic structure.<sup>22</sup> The agents assessed a 15% tax on the shipment based on the value of each case according to its material contents – either "wood, iron, glass, or manufactures of the same."<sup>23</sup> Customs

officials categorized the majority of the shipment as raw material, “wood not specially provided for.”<sup>24</sup>

Wanamaker’s appealed the decision, arguing that the house should be treated as a single work of art “produced more than 100 years prior to the date of importation.” The store had two clear motives requesting the house be categorized as an artistic antique – one, so potential buyers would not question the house’s authenticity; and two, to avoid the fifteen percent customs duty from which art and antiques were exempt).<sup>25</sup>

This conflict allows a rare insight into early twentieth-century concepts of Tudor architecture and its authenticity. After examining the photographs, drawings, and model made of the original Goatley Farm, the Customs agents stated that

...the clapboards or weatherboards show thereon were not imported and were not antique. It is also shown that the stone wall constituting the first story of the house was not imported. It is also admitted that the windows of the original house had small panes of glass instead of large ones, as shown in the photograph...The plaster of the original house was not imported, neither were the main stairway and a great many parts of the interior of the house, such as floors, doors, partitions, etc.<sup>26</sup>

The agents questioned if one could, “with the material taken from Goatley house, construct a building which would be an artistic structure without such an amount of other material that it would lose its identity and original appearance?”<sup>27</sup> Ultimately, overseeing U.S. Treasury Department rejected Wanamaker’s protests, concluding,

Doubtless this structure called Goatley house, with its original surroundings intact, would be considered interesting and possibly artistic. Being removed therefrom, torn to pieces, and bereft of its many quaint artistic features, a serious question is raised as to whether it would be considered an antique, artistic entity.<sup>28</sup>

The question of authenticity did not dissuade the E. S. Burke, Jr., a mining magnate of Cleveland, from buying Goatley Farm. Architects Meade & Hamilton and local stonemason George Brown reconfigured the materials into a guest wing at Hillbrook, Burke’s 300-acre weekend estate in Chagrin Falls, Ohio.<sup>29</sup> Although the Burkes acquired photographs and measured drawings of the original Tudor structure, they appear to have lost all but a model Wanamaker’s provided of its intended reconstruction. It is unclear how closely the Hillbrook guest wing conformed to Goatley Farm or to Wanamaker’s plans.

Around 1921, Meade & Hamilton constructed the main 15,000-square-foot house in a complimentary Tudor Revival style. It is unclear if Nancy McClelland, who left Wanamaker’s to found her own firm in 1922, helped to decorate the house. She illustrated Hillbrook twice in her

1926 book, *Practical Book of Decorative Wall-Treatments*.<sup>30</sup> It appeared a decade later in *Country Life* (New York). “One would fully believe that England was just outside the door, after seeing the ancient beams,” reported the magazine.<sup>31</sup>

The article described the guest wing as “small,” which suggests at least one reason why it ultimately proved unsuited to the Burke family’s needs. Around 1945, Burke sold the guest wing, which was physically removed from the Hillbrook estate. It took about two more years for the new owner, Leonard C. Hanna, to have the structure transported 18 miles south to his own estate.<sup>32</sup> Hanna was a grandson of the founder of Hanna Mining and spent much of his time in New York. It is perhaps no coincidence that Leonard Hanna set out to acquire the remnants of Goatley Farm for his own

remaking. Hanna’s mother had been a client of Nancy McClelland, who had found the house for Wanamaker’s, and his cousin, Daniel R. Hanna, was the second owner of The Croft, the Tudor confection Arthur Vernay built an hour north of Manhattan.<sup>33</sup>

Named after the 350-acre property’s rolling hills and valleys, Leonard Hanna’s Hilo Farm was indeed a working farm, with cornfields, orchards, flower, vegetable, and herb gardens, poultry, sheep, and dairy cows.<sup>34</sup> Detroit architect Robert O. Derrick designed most of the structures –in Tudor Revival style, of course–beginning in the 1920s. The estate boasted a covered bridge, gatehouse (with eight rooms and four baths), stables, garages, power house, bathhouse, several servants’ houses, greenhouse, root house (for storing apples and such), smoke house, a duck house, coops for chickens and pigeons,

and dove cote.<sup>35</sup> The estate was as swank as it was agrarian. Hanna hosted numerous parties there, which included such celebrities as Cole Porter, Gloria Swanson, and Joan Crawford.<sup>36</sup>

Hanna appears to have reconstructed Goatley Farm as Burke had built it. He added a wing to either side of the older house to accommodate a new entrance hall, billiards room, kitchen, and additional bedrooms and bathrooms. The 500-year-old Goatley Farm cottage, originally from Ashford, England, and rebuilt twice in Ohio, embodies the adaptability of Tudor architecture, as well as its perceived glamour.

Had he not purchased what was left of Goatley Farm, already in the United States, from Burke, it is unlikely that Leonard Hanna would have been able to import an entire Tudor structure in the 1940s. Protests from Britain over such sales reached a fevered pitch in 1930, when Arthur Vernay was denied permission to export “The Great Chamber” of Gilling Castle from Yorkshire to America. The *London Daily Telegraph*’s editorial railed against “these depredations on our irreplaceable treasures...”



Great Hall from Goatley Farm, as advertised by Wanamaker’s, 1916. Nancy McClelland Archives, Cooper-Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.

. . . It is not pleasant to have to contemplate the wholesale export of our best pictures and rarest books, but it is infinitely worse to stand with our hands tied and be able to do nothing while our historic houses are stripped of their panels and stained glass and our finest domestic architecture is razed to the ground to satisfy the whim of the wealthy American.<sup>37</sup>

As a result of Vernay's denial of permission to export, William Randolph Hearst acquired the Gilling Castle components with the intention to use them at his Tudor house in St. Donat's Castle in Wales, thus avoiding taking them from the United Kingdom. The materials were discovered decades later still in their packing crates, and returned to Gilling Castle.

A postnote: After Hanna's death, in 1957, Hilo Farm was bought by a real estate broker who subdivided the property. Not surprisingly, Hilo Farm's newer residents continue to favor houses in the Tudor Revival style.



### Notes

1. The film was directed by René Clair, and written by René Clair, Eric Keown, Geoffrey Kerr, and Robert E. Sherwood. My thanks to Christopher Monkhouse for this reference.
2. My thanks to Richard Guy Wilson and Gavin Townsend, who referred me to Townsend's 1986 Ph.D. dissertation, "The Tudor House in America: 1890-1930" for the University of California, Santa Barbara.
3. See Chris Novelli's excellent article, "Agecroft Hall: From Elizabethan Manor House to Victorian Country House," *Nineteenth Century*, v33, no. 2 (Spring, 2013).
4. Jennifer Elvgren, "To Be in England," *Historic Traveler* 4, n 1 (November 1997): 58.
5. "Agecroft Hall, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form," United States Department of the Interior National Park Service, December 13, 1978.
6. "Virginia House, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form," United States Department of the Interior National Park Service, June 13, 1990.
7. "Virginia House, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form," June 13, 1990.
8. Ibid. The Weddells commissioned measured drawings, which have not survived, of the original Warwick Priory. Their stated plan to rebuilt the house, rather than merely dismantle it for its interiors, appears to have been the deciding factor in favor of allowing the sale.
9. See John Harris, *Moving Rooms: The Trade in Architectural Salvages* (New Haven: Yale University, 2007), 106 and 247.
10. "House Built Entirely of Imported Materials," *New York Herald*, August 2, 1914.
11. Detailed drawings of Compton Wynates were published in Thomas Garner and Arthur Stratton's influential *Domestic Architecture of England During the Tudor Period* (London and New York: B.T. Batsford and Charles Scribner Sons, 1911).
12. See Harris, *Moving Rooms*, 2, 14, and 277.
13. See "Early English Tudor Home of Sixteenth Century Reproduced for Large Estate Near Morristown," *The New York Times*, April 12, 1914. George Allen visited Compton Wynates and sent his architect Charles Berg to study it first-hand, so as to reproduce it as accurately as possible.
14. "Dwelling Houses Full of Pleasantness Beginning to Fill Our Land," *The Craftsman* XXX no. 1 (April, 1916): 66.
15. "Dwelling Houses Full of Pleasantness..." 64-77.
16. Arthur Stannard Vernay, *Decorations and English Interiors* (New York: William Helburn, Inc.), 1927.
17. The room was accessioned in 1919 (as 19.17; later renumbered 23.67). Period Room files, The Minneapolis Institute of Arts.
18. My thanks to Dianne Barron, Managing Director, Teatown Lake Reservation.
19. Goodnow had repeatedly espoused the charm of Tudor houses in the design manual she co-authored with Rayne Adams, *The Honest House* (New York: The Century Co., 1908).
20. *Au Quatrième: Important Collections of Antiques assembled in Europe During the Past Year* (New York: John Wanamaker, c. 1916). Nancy McClelland Archives, Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, Smithsonian Institution.
21. "Store Imports English 'Farm,'" *The Spokesman-Review*, November 8, 1916.
22. Ibid.
23. *Index to Treasury Decisions Under Customs, Internal Revenue, and Other Laws*, vol. 33 (July-December 1917), Washington: Government Printing Office, 1918, 9-11.
24. "Store Imports English 'Farm'".
25. See paragraph 656 of the Tariff Act, October 3, 1913.
26. *Index to Treasury Decisions Under Customs, Internal Revenue, and Other Laws* 33.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. "Old English, Magnificently Done in Chagrin Falls," *Country Life* (New York), 71 (March, 1937): 64-69 credits Meade & Hamilton as Burke's architects, and Ellen Biddle Shipman for the landscape design. Shipman's archives at Cornell University confirm Meade & Hamilton as architects, and date Shipman's work to 1931. George Brown is credited as Burke's stonemason in "Hilo Farm, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form," United States Department of the Interior National Park Service, June 13, 1990.
30. Nancy Vincent McClelland, *Practical Book of Decorative Wall-Treatments* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1926). My thanks to the staff at the Club at Hillbrook, operates the Burke estate as a resort and event facility.
31. "Old English, Magnificently Done in Chagrin Falls," *Country Life* [NY], 71 (March, 1937): 66.
32. My thanks to Krista Weisberg of the Club at Hillbrook, and Ohio architecture historians Kevin Rose, Elwin Robison, Tom Wolf, and Yolita Rausche for their help with this research.
33. "Ossining Estate of Dan Hanna is Sold," *New York Statesman* [Yonkers], December 4, 1922.
34. Jim Collins, "Tudor England Lives Again at Hilo Farm," *The News-Herald* [West Lake County, Ohio], November 15, 1963.
35. Jim Collins, "Tudor England Lives Again at Hilo Farm."
36. "Hilo Farm, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form," United States Department of the Interior National Park Service, June 13, 1990. My thanks to Lynn Vandervort, curator at the Lake County Historical Society, which preserves a file on Hilo Farm as well as the original model of Goatley Farm commissioned by Wanamaker's.
37. As quoted in "The Quester," *The New York Sun*, September 6, 1930.

# The Victorian Society in America

## London Summer Schools, 1974-2014

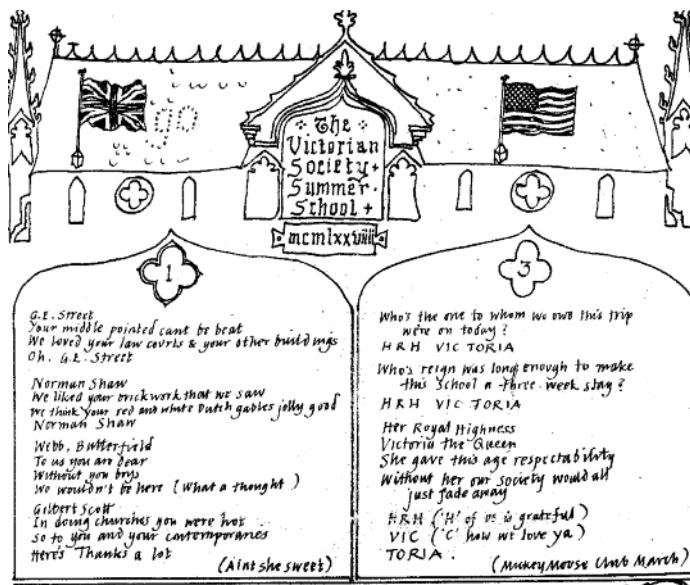
### *A Short History of the London Summer School*

GAVIN STAMP

The Victorian Society Summer School, latterly the Victorian Society in America London Summer School, took place for the fortieth time this year. Which means, rather to my horror, that I have been involved with it for some 37 years. As there is no archive – had I kept the paper generated by the School each year it would be overwhelming – I must rely on my memory and those of colleagues to try and reconstruct its history, and my memory is fallible. I know that the Victorian Society [UK], in conjunction with the Victorian Society in America, first ran the Anglo-American Summer School in 1975 with Geoffrey Tyack as the first Director. It was intended primarily but not exclusively for Americans interested in British architecture and arts of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Victorian Society [UK] had also been holding an Anglo-American Study Tour each summer, and this continued for a few more years.

I was asked to run the Summer School in 1977, something I was able to do as I was freelance. The programme was worked out in collaboration with Andrew Saint, and the basic plan we then established – a combination of lectures and visits – essentially survives today, although the School then ran for as long as three weeks rather than two. The lectures were held in St John's Lodge in Regent's Park, a villa by John Raffield, later altered and enlarged for Lord Bute, amongst others, which was then used by Bedford College, University of London (and today is leased by the Sultan of Brunei). Accommodation was provided in some houses in Dorset Square which then served as a Bedford College hostel (for the first two years Hanover Lodge in Regent's Park was used). Certain visits which continue, such as the tour of houses in Surrey, and a visit to Oxford (not Cambridge) always led by Peter Howell, took place in that first year, but the longer trip out of London to see something of great Victorian cities only went to Birmingham where, as ever since, our guide was Alan Crawford. In subsequent years this tour was extended to Liverpool and Manchester. Liverpool, back in the late 1970s, seemed like a ghost city, poor, empty, pointless, but full of extraordinary buildings. At first we used university halls of residence; later we stayed at the grand but notoriously chaotic Hotel Adelphi. From an early stage the driver of the coach has been the reassuringly dependable John Cook.

I wish I still had copies of the early programmes. What I now remember are the lecturers and guides who are no



longer with us. In the earliest years these included such celebrities as Sir Nikolaus Pevsner (President of the British Victorian Society) and Sir John Summerson, the eminent British architectural historian. There was also Clive Wainwright of the V&A who would talk about Pugin; the architect Ian Grant who illustrated Victorian interiors in addition to conducting a tour of West End clubs; the engineer James Sutherland who discussed Victorian train sheds; the

architect Roderick Gradidge, of startling appearance, who would convey his enthusiasm for the work of Lutyens; John Brandon-Jones, another architect, who seemed to be a living continuation of the Arts and Crafts movement and who would bring along original drawings to accompany his lecture on Philip Webb; and the venerable Tom Greeves, the Saviour of Bedford Park.

There was, of course, always an end-of-term party, which for a number of years was held in the semi-derelict Hoxton Hall, an East End music hall. In later years the end of the course was celebrated in the Playhouse Theatre under the arches of Charing Cross Station. And for many years a highlight on the trip North was dinner in the working grill room in the *Waterloo* public house in Smethwick, a masterpiece of commercial ceramic architecture, something which is no longer possible because of the deliberate neglect of this (listed) building. In the early days, when we were all younger, rather less attention was paid to physical comfort on the course, partly because of the need for economy, and in recent years the graduation from university halls of residence to staying in hotels has been welcomed.

For the record, I served as Director from 1977 until 1982. The Summer School was then run for a couple of years by J. Mordaunt Crook and Hermione Hobhouse, who rather changed its character. In 1985 I was invited back, and restored things. The job then became easier as an Assistant Director was appointed to handle the challenging domestic side of the programme. This was Marta Galicki, who continued in this role for a decade. In 1994, by which time I was teaching in Glasgow, I stepped down as Director for the second and final time but continued to lead the five-day trip to the North-West. Andrew Saint and Teresa Sladen then took over the running of the programme for three years, succeeded in 1998 by Ian Dungavell and David Crellin. It was at this time that the Summer School was shortened from three weeks to two. In 2000 it was run by David Crellin and Liz Robinson. After that, Ian Cox took over the helm and has been the Director ever since except for the few years when, because of Ian's health, Kit Wedd was in charge. From the very beginning there had been inevitable tension between the Victorian Society in America, which undertook most recruitment and produced the necessary funding, and the Victorian Society in London, where the Summer School was based and organised. For many years it was not clear whether the Summer School was an Anglo-American enterprise or an American operation for which those of us running it in London were merely agents. The eventual solution was the transfer of the ownership of the enterprise across the Atlantic to America. This was effected at the turn of the century by Ian Dungavell, the Director of the Victorian Society [UK].

From the beginning, as intended, most "students" came from North America, but there have always been a few British participants, some sponsored by the National Trust and occasionally by English Heritage. The Victorian Society was always keen to recruit from elsewhere, and over the years, in addition to several participants from Australia and New Zealand, there have been people from South Africa, Holland, Belgium, Hungary, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Poland, the Czech Republic, Russia, Italy and even Roumania on the course, giving a welcome cosmopolitan character and contributing much to its success. And this year, we not only



have a Croat from New Zealand on board but also, for the first time, someone from Uruguay.

I am aware that, as Director, I may have acquired a reputation for ruthless timekeeping. If so, I am not sorry as I always assumed that anyone enrolling on the course would want to experience as many as possible of the great Victorian buildings of England, especially if they had travelled across the Atlantic to see them, and this can only be achieved by adhering to a well-planned, busy and comprehensive programme. Those who fail to be back on the bus in time simply inconvenience and waste the time of the majority, but, contrary to legend, only once in my time was a student deliberately left behind—at Alton Towers—and that was by popular demand.

The Summer School has, I think, always been fun as well as serious. *The Victorian Society Annual* for 1977 notes that it was "intended to provide a general but high level background to Victorian and Edwardian architecture." This is a worthy ambition which it has now managed to realise every July for forty years. I find that this *Annual* also records that in 1977, my first year as Director, "The school began with a party at the RIBA Drawings Collection thanks to the hospitality of the Curator, and ended with a party at the Hoxton Music Hall, an evening memorable for the performance of *Sweeney Todd: the Demon Barber*, in which the Secretary (Miss Hobhouse) was dispatched by Mr Wainwright, with Mr Howell looking on." Three years later, in response to what was then an annual visit to Grims Dyke, the entertainment was *The Death of Gilbert*, a musical dramatisation of the life and untimely death of the more intriguing half of Gilbert & Sullivan, written by Andrew Saint.

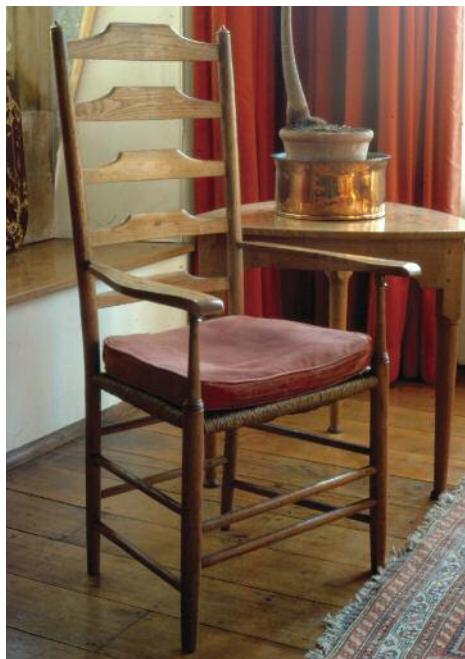


Many thanks to Ian Cox, Alan Crawford, Ian Dungavell, Andrew Saint and Geoffrey Tyack for their help in writing this brief history. The 2015 VSA London Summer School will be held from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_, 2015, headquartered in London. Staff will include Ian Cox, Director; Gavin Stamp, Assistant Director; Alan Crawford and Liz Leckie. For further information, please see the advertisement on the back page of this issue.

# The Arts and Crafts Movement in England

ALAN CRAWFORD

*I have given this lecture to the VSA London Summer School almost every year for the last thirty years or so, always speaking from a few pages of notes. But last year I was about two-thirds of the way through the lecture when my mind went completely blank. I had to stop, apologise, and start the lecture up again. It wasn't a great disaster and the students could not have been kinder. But I have been worrying all year that it will happen again, so I have written the lecture out in full. I hope you enjoy it.*



(L to R): William De Morgan, tiles, c. 1880; Ernest Gimson, ladderback chair, c. 1900; W. A. S. Benson, table lamp, c. 1880; C. R. Ashbee, decanter of silver and green glass, 1903; William Morris, woven textile, "Tulip and Rose", 1876.

On 25 May 1887 a group of artists and designers met to find a title for an exhibition society that they had recently formed. They were playing around with phrases like 'Combined Arts' when the bookbinder T. J. Cobden-Sanderson suggested 'Arts and Crafts'. It worked. A phrase was found that neatly expressed the mingling of fine and

decorative art, and the society became the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society.<sup>1</sup> The full phrase 'Arts and Crafts movement', however, did not appear until later, and we should be careful how we understand it.<sup>2</sup> The Arts and Crafts was not a social or a political movement like other movements of the time such as trade unionism or the

movement for women's suffrage, which had strong social organisations, manifestos and campaigning goals. It was made up of artists, architects and designers, who belonged only marginally in the public world, and they had only two representative organisations: the Art Workers' Guild, a talking club for private members which resolutely refused to take any public action; and the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, which held exhibitions in the West End of London at first annually, and then once every three years. None of this feels like a campaign. In fact, if we are looking for the heart of the movement, we will probably find it in private rather than public places, a quiet creative spirit moving among artists' studios and craftsmen's workshops. This lecture is an attempt to catch something of that spirit, to get to the heart of the Arts and Crafts movement in England.

But first, some markers.

Dates: The movement had its roots in the Gothic Revival at mid-century and much in common with the Aesthetic Movement in the 1870s, but it is in the 1880s, with the founding of the Art Workers' Guild in 1884 and Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society in 1887, that it begins to take shape. The 1890s and early 1900s were the time of its greatest flourishing, when it came most to public attention, spreading through much of Britain. Around 1910 fashion and public interest seemed to turn away from it.<sup>3</sup> But the movement had staying power, and in the years round 1900 it had taken a strong hold on English art schools. Those schools created a second generation of artist-craftsmen who would flourish in the 1920s and 1930s.

Place: Late Victorian society and culture were deeply metropolitan, and the Arts and Crafts was no exception: London was the centre of the movement and most of the leading figures lived and worked there. The most important centres outside London were in the big industrial cities, particularly Birmingham and Manchester, which is perhaps surprising considering the anti-industrial character of much of the movement. There were also some small workshops set up in the countryside; they make a good romantic story, but they were small in number.

What, then, will take us to the heart of the movement?

Is it words?

I think most of us start with words when trying to grasp the character of a movement like this. We talk about 'principles', 'tenets', 'the design philosophy of the movement'. But we should not be too keen to pin down the Arts and Crafts with words because theory and practice in the movement did not always go hand in hand. For example, in his lectures on art in the 1870s, William Morris spoke of the medieval craftsman as free to work as he wished, taking such pleasure in his work that it overflowed into ornament. That, Morris said, is how we make art. But only a few years earlier he had introduced pattern designs into the products of Morris and Co: wallpapers, printed and woven textiles, carpets, repeating designs which are either produced by machine or by mechanically repetitive hand work. The misfit between theory and practice was simply that there was no freedom for his employees in the execution of his designs, in laying down the blocks for printed textiles, or knotting the pile on handmade carpet, or working at Jacquard looms. What he said was not always a guide to what he did.

If not words, then perhaps pictures?

Can we play at being art historians, take a few photographs of Arts and Crafts objects, spread them out, and begin to see a style in the movement? Perhaps. In Europe at just this date there was a progressive movement in the decorative arts which could be defined almost entirely in this way, namely Art Nouveau. You look at French or Belgian decorative art and you see the distinctive whiplash curve. Is the same true of Arts and Crafts: can you look at a chair or a pot and say, as easily, 'That is Arts and Crafts'? Is there an Arts and Crafts style?

Plates 1-5 show a selection of objects designed by the leading names of the English movement: textiles by William Morris; furniture by Ernest Gimson; a table lamp by W. A. S. Benson; a decanter by C. R. Ashbee; tiles by William De Morgan.

Do you see a common style here? I don't think I do. And this brings me to the crux of what I want to say. I don't see an Arts and Crafts style, a set of coherent visual features such as define French or Belgian Art Nouveau. But, on the other hand, I still think you can look at a chair and, on the basis of what you see, say 'That is an Arts and Crafts chair.' This is a delicate point, and there are two thoughts behind it:

One is that, in order to get to the heart of the movement, we must look at the objects. objects, not words or even pictures, are our best guides to the spirit of the makers.

And second, when we are looking at these objects, we should not be thinking about distinct styles or even be keen to use precise words. We are on the delicate and uncertain ground of creativity, and language may be vague. We need to think about broad qualities and characteristics in Arts and Crafts objects, qualities that reflect the tastes and attitudes of the makers. Not style, not tenets, not principles, but tastes and attitudes. Broad qualities, down-to-earth language.

I am going to talk about five such qualities which I think are the principal characteristics of English Arts and Crafts objects and which bring us as near as we can get to the heart of the movement.

For the first quality we don't have a handy word in English, but the Germans have one and it is often used in connection with the design of objects: *Sachlichkeit*. The primary meaning of the root-word 'Sache' is 'thing', but there are many others – 'luggage', 'fact', 'business', and there is a resounding abstract noun 'Sachlichkeit'. My dictionary translates 'Sachlichkeit' as 'reality', 'objectivity', 'impartiality' – ambitious abstractions. But I want to go back to the very ordinary root meaning of 'thing' and coin a new word for the purposes of this lecture: 'thinginess'. Thinginess is a striking and widespread feature of many Arts and Crafts objects. It is the happy feeling you get when you look at something and it seems so good, so satisfactory, that you do not want to add to it. It is a kind of seriousness and puritanism which sees the essence or body of an object, a desk, a jug, a piece of clothing, and wants to do without decoration because decoration seems like frills.

Thinginess is making much of the physical essentials of an object. The designer draws out the qualities of the metal, the wood, the joins, the supports, and plays with them, so that these things are not just construction, but decoration as well. It is as if he is saying to his client, 'Today, I will not give you butterflies or princesses to decorate your cabinet, I will



(L to R): Sidney Barnsley, blanket box in oak, 1896; Birmingham Guild of Handicraft, brass and copper wares, c. 1898; William De Morgan, vase decorated in red, gold and silver lustre, c. 1890; Arthur Gaskin, tailpiece to contents page, *English Illustrated Magazine* 1892-3.

give you hinges.' Some examples:

(Plate 6) This is an oak blanket box of 1896 by the Cotswold craftsman Sidney Barnsley; it is plain – there is no obvious decoration – and the effect is massive. But in the details of construction Barnsley has chosen to play a few self-conscious games: the dovetail joints of the end-frame have been drawn out so that they stand up like little fins. The end-frames have been chamfered with an adze, swung between the legs, a technique which country wheelwrights used to lighten the spokes of a wheel. At first glance it is just another aspect of the box's massiveness but if you walk round you notice that the chamfering on one side exactly matches that on the other. What seemed random and massive is also precise and delicate. And is Barnsley perhaps smiling inwardly at the thought that he has used a technique for lightening timber to make his box seem heavier?

(Plate 7) And here are three pieces of brass and copper ware made in the 1890s by the Birmingham Guild of Handicraft. On the left a copper plant-pot holder with brass handles that sit well on the copper. In the centre a radically simple brass table lamp, the whole thing free of decoration except for the quiet form of the base, cut into ogee outlines. On the right a plain brass kettle of traditional design. We should think here of what was proper in middle-class English homes. The pot and the lamp belonged in the drawing room. The kettle belonged in the kitchen. But all three objects have the same austere look; all three are typical of the Arts and Crafts. A wise critic at the time commented that one effect of the Arts and Crafts movement was 'to spread the kitchen over the rest of the house'.<sup>4</sup>

(Plate 8) My second quality is almost the opposite of the first. Walter Crane once wrote:

The great advantage and charm of the Morrisian method is that it lends itself to either simplicity or to splendour. You might be almost plain enough to please Thoreau, with a rush-bottomed chair, piece of matting, and oaken trestle-table; or you might have gold and lustre (the choice ware of William de Morgan) gleaming from the sideboard, and jewelled light in your windows, and walls hung with rich arras tapestry.<sup>5</sup>

Crane is saying that there were two currents of taste in the Arts and Crafts, and though that is obvious enough, I don't know of anyone else who put it quite so clearly. And it was sharp of him to see that these two currents of taste were almost contradictory: the Arts and Crafts was always falling into opposites.

There isn't an obvious word for this second quality, not even a made-up word like 'thinginess'. 'Splendour' sounds weak; 'the pleasures of ornament', or 'The pleasures of decoration' both sound plodding. Crane talks of jewelled light, gold and lustre, arras tapestry. That catches it. Perhaps the best thing to say is that there is a bundle of tastes and techniques that are at the opposite end of the spectrum from thinginess or usefulness.

William De Morgan is a good example of the decorative strain in the Arts and Crafts. He started his career by failing as a painter and then made a success of it as a potter. He loved technical experiments: in the 1860s he took up stained glass, and one day in 1869 he noticed a metallic sheen on his glass rather like that on sixteenth-century Italian lustreware. Over the next few years he reconstructed the complex and traditional lustre glaze and, turning his back on stained glass, set up a pottery in which over the next thirty years he produced thousands of tiles and pots, of increasingly commanding design. But in all this he was not the least interested in the pots as vessels, only in their surfaces for decoration. He showed no surprise if his vases leaked.

(Plate 9) Quite a few Arts and Crafts designers started life as painters, lost their way and then discovered the pleasures of decorative art. These people would naturally choose to work in pictorial media such as stained glass and book illustration. Christopher Whall was just such a failed painter but he became the leading stained-glass artist of the Arts and Crafts. Others started life as painters and went on painting all their lives, but added other, more purely decorative ways of working. Arthur Gaskin, for instance, trained as a fine artist at Birmingham Municipal School of Art in the 1880s, but at the end of the decade he started making little images for wood engraving, to be cut on wood and then printed alongside text as illustrations. They were small, some only a couple of inches high, dark, economical and intensely romantic. His was a classic Arts and Crafts move: in turning to wood engraving, he abandoned skill, status and refinement, but he gained in expressiveness.

(Plate 10) My third Arts and Crafts 'quality' is a love of nature. Almost all Western decorative styles make some use of flowers and leaves and trees, so I need to emphasise what is peculiar about the Arts and Crafts sense of nature. It is romantic, but the nature that Arts and Crafts people loved was not the big wild nature, which inspired the Romantics of the early C19, the nature of torrents and forests and storms at sea. Arts and Crafts nature is small, intimate, humble, nature on your doorstep, the English countryside. It is

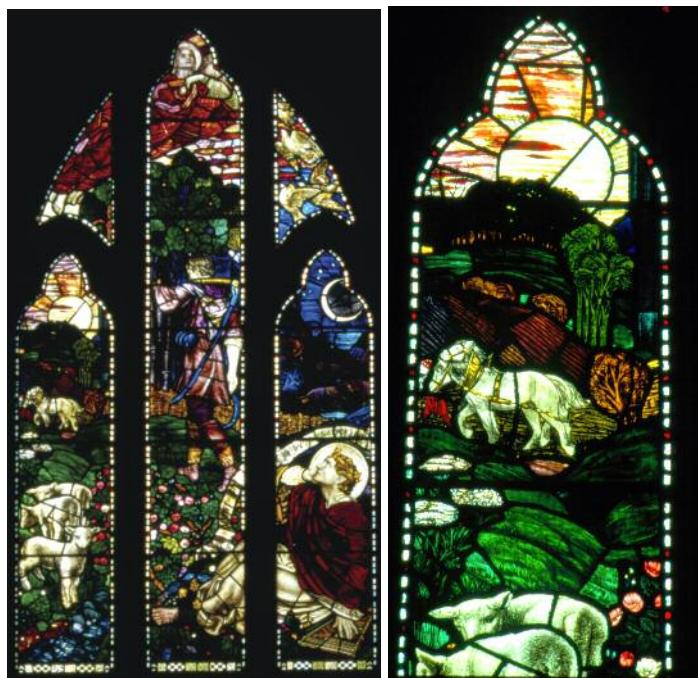
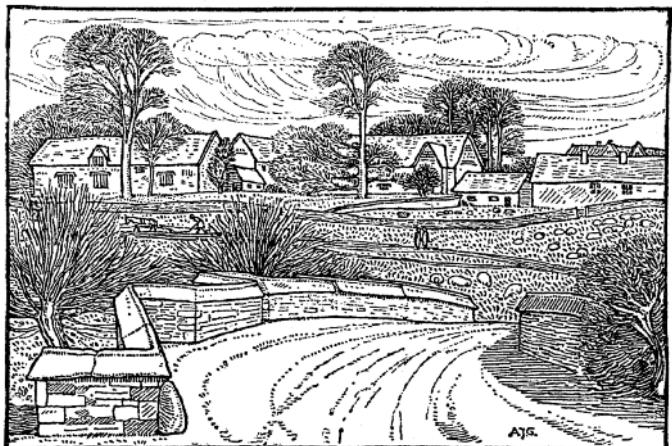
cultivated, worked, ploughed, and has been over centuries, as much the work of man as of nature, a history in fields. There are villages nestling among the hills.

(Plate 11) This feeling for the English countryside is the strongest note in Arts and Crafts architecture. I said earlier that the Arts and Crafts movement was centred on London, but it is hard to find Arts and Crafts architecture in this metropolis; it is all in the countryside. The building type most typical of the Arts and Crafts is a middle class house in the country. It is modelled on English vernacular houses of the C17 and C18, large cottages and farmhouses which were often called 'yeomen's houses', evoking the yeomen of England, farming stock who were seen as the backbone of the country. This house, Copgrove just outside Broadway on the edge of the Cotswolds is in fact just such a seventeenth-century house which was dismantled, moved through ninety degrees and rebuilt by the Birmingham architect C. E. Bateman in about 1910. Arts and Crafts houses are always tied to their locality by building methods and materials—stone here in the Cotswolds, tile-hanging and timber-framing in Kent and Sussex, and so on. (Plate 12) And they are carefully sited in the landscape; sometimes they seem almost to be growing out of the ground. Stoneywell is a cottage in the Charnwood Forest in Leicestershire, designed for his brother by Ernest Gimson. The Charnwood Forest is not a forest of trees; it is a bare and rocky outcrop of granite, and Gimson has chosen to make his cottage itself a kind of rocky outcrop, aping the land.

Arts and Crafts people saw nature very differently from the design reformers of the mid-nineteenth century, who believed that principles for good design and pattern-making could be derived from the study of the underlying geometry of nature. This rational and quasi-scientific approach meant nothing to Arts and Crafts people, who came to nature with a simple, trusting realism. For them what mattered was fresh air, the fields, the paths you walk along, the sun and sky, the mystery of trees. Their realism was ordinary and full of feeling. In his handbook, *Silverwork and jewellery*, Henry Wilson gave instructions on how to make a pendant in the form of a nightingale. He wrote: 'First go and watch one singing.'

(Plates 13-14) Some of the most powerful Arts and Crafts images of nature can be found in churches, partly because scripture and the Anglican liturgy are full of such images, but also for the less obvious reason that many Arts and Crafts artists had a feeling for nature that was strongly but quite unspecifically religious, romantic, visionary. Church work gave scope to this feeling. This is the west window of the church at Hook in Worcestershire by the Birmingham artist Henry Payne. The psalmist, King David, is tucked into the left-hand corner and the window illustrates Psalm 104: 'Lord how manifold are thy works...Man goes forth unto his work, and to his labour

(Top to bottom): Arthur Gaskin, illustration to Hans Christian Andersen, *Stories and fairy tales* (Orpington: George Allen, 1893), vol. 2 pg. 39; C. E. Bateman, Copgrove, West End lane, Broadway, Worcestershire, 1910. Ernest Gimson, Stoneywell, Ulverscroft, Leicestershire, 1898-9; Henry Payne, West window, Church of the Good Shepherd, Hook, Upton upon Severn, Worcestershire, 1905; Detail of West window.



until evening...' This is all Biblical and the landscape is typical of the Arts and Crafts but, with its rounded hills and the sun behind, it is also the landscape of the early nineteenth-century visionary artists William Blake and Samuel Palmer, the English landscape drenched with the presence of God. It is not an accident that Henry Payne said of himself 'I do not belong to any established church, but I yield to none in my sense of the mysteries.'

My fourth quality, a love of the past, is like a twin of the fourth. Love of the past goes hand-in-hand with a love of nature. And, just as it was entirely normal in Western decorative art to draw on nature for inspiration and imagery, so it was also normal for architects and designers to draw on the past. It had been since the Renaissance.

When I first got interested in the Arts and Crafts movement in the 1970s, the subject was dominated by Nikolaus Pevsner's *Pioneers of the Modern Movement* of 1936, a book which told a story of progressive movements in European architecture and design in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, culminating in the Modern Movement in Germany in the 1920s. This mapping of the recent past was still very influential in the 1970s. Pevsner saw the English Arts and Crafts movement as a staging post on the road to twentieth-century Modernism, and he illustrated the intriguing Mary Ward House in Tavistock Place, Bloomsbury, which has a feeling of early Frank Lloyd Wright about it, calling it 'the most remarkable example of twentieth century feeling reached by English architects before 1900'.<sup>8</sup> That was the point of Pevsner's progressivism: to look forward. If the Arts and Crafts looked forward, he was its champion. If it looked back, he was disappointed and began to talk about 'historicism'.

This was a complete misunderstanding. The Arts and Crafts sense of the past is a creative spirit, not a ball and chain holding the movement back. Pevsner used the cold, dismissive, academic-sounding term 'historicism' but Arts and Crafts people used the simple and affectionate phrase 'old work'. They loved old work. It was part of the air they breathed. They had one storehouse of the past in the South Kensington Museum, which had been building up incomparable historical collections of decorative art since the middle of the century, and another, even richer storehouse in the glories of the English countryside. They had the keys to unlock this treasure chest. They had bicycles, weekends, holidays, sketchbooks, and sometimes cameras. There was a medieval church in almost every village and, not far from it, some fine old house. Ernest Gimson toured Somerset in 1891, poking into cottages, buying old chairs and household implements, drawing what he could not buy.

Old work created a sense of wealth in the Arts and Crafts and that was partly a wealth of associations. Part of the character and meaning of Arts and Crafts designs derives

from the phases of history and bodies of earlier work which, so to speak, stand behind them. We have already seen how the idealised figure of the English yeoman stands behind the small country houses of the Arts and Crafts. Among pieces we have already seen, Morris's textiles draw richly on sixteenth and seventeenth-century textiles from Italy, Turkey and Iran; Ernest Gimson's ladderback chair says 'cottage' loud and clear; Ashbee's decanter, though it looks so sophisticated, was based on an old glass bottle he found in the foundations of a house he was building, and which he took to be a rough, Elizabethan, 'Falstaffian' thing.

My fifth and last quality is called 'against the trade', and that title needs some explaining. People often say that the

Arts and Crafts movement was hostile to machinery and in some ways it was. But there was another opposition within the movement which was much more basic and powerful and is often overlooked, and that was being 'against the trade'.

At this time 'trade' was a general term for the world of manufacturing and retailing. But Arts and Crafts people used it specifically to refer to manufacturers and retailers in the trades they themselves practised: in London the furniture makers in the Tottenham Court Road and metalworkers and jewellers in Clerkenwell; metalworkers and jewellers again in Birmingham; potters in Stoke on Trent; textile manufacturers in Manchester. When they used it in this way, 'trade' was a word of scorn. If an Arts and Crafts maker described another maker as 'trade' it meant that person was not an artist, not part of the Arts and Crafts elite. If he called a piece of work 'trade' he was saying its taste was not that of the Arts and Crafts but of the market. If he described a manufacturer or retailer as 'trade' he would be saying that profit and commercial success mattered most there. 'Trade' was the Other against which the Arts and Crafts defined itself.

Let me give you an example, taken from the world of jewellery, of how being 'against the trade' shaped Arts and Crafts work. Late Victorian popular jewellery was dominated by diamonds which were discovered in industrial quantities in South Africa in

the 1860s and 1870s. Their pale flash and glitter was seen as an indication of wealth. A typical piece of individual jewellery at this time would consist of diamonds accompanied by other pale stones; a delicate, discreet mount, usually in gold; and a range of whimsical motifs that are very literally rendered: violins, insects, horseshoes, little books and birds.

(Plate 15) Plate 16 shows, by contrast, a piece of Arts and Crafts jewellery. Instead of diamonds and hints of wealth there are ostentatiously cheap materials – enamel and semi-precious stones. Instead of flash and glitter, there is rich and subtle colour. The settings are bold and generously made. Instead of literal motifs, there are vague suggestions of natural forms. Is it a flower or is it a butterfly? You get the



C. R. Ashbee, Pendant in gold, enamel, garnets, amethysts and mother-of-pearl, c. 1900.

impression that all the Arts and Crafts jeweller had to do if she was a little short of inspiration was go for a walk down Oxford Street or New Bond Street, see what was in the shops, and then go home and design the opposite.

So there you are, five keys which should open the doors of the Arts and Crafts objects for you: 'Thinginess'; The Pleasures of Ornament; The Love of Nature; The Love of the Past; and 'Against the Trade'. I hope that, when you are next looking at English Arts and Crafts work you will find at least one of these qualities there, perhaps more; you won't find all five. And I have been wondering, while writing this lecture, what would happen if you tried to open the doors of American Arts and Crafts work using these keys. Would any of them work? I don't know the answer to that.

At the beginning of this lecture, I said that I hoped to get, not just to the heart of Arts and Crafts objects, but to the heart of the movement at large, to catch the spirit of the Arts and Crafts as a whole. I don't think I have done that. I have been too busy trying to understand the objects which document the ordinary creative habits of the Arts and Crafts to explore the larger picture. But there are two words which have cropped up a lot in what I have said, and which suggest that larger picture: 'romantic' and 'Romanticism'. These at least I can enlarge upon.

I am thinking of the great enlargement of sensibility that was felt in the politics, art and culture of the western world, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century and I am wondering whether we should not see the Arts and Crafts movement as a late, perhaps the last, manifestation of that movement: Romanticism reaching the decorative arts at the latter end of the nineteenth century.

I note that the Romantic movement gave the title and status of genius to the poets, artists and musicians, and I am wondering whether one of the most extraordinary things which John Ruskin did in that part of his *Stones of Venice* which he called 'The Nature of Gothic' was to borrow the mantle of genius from the poet and the artist and hang it, gently but shockingly, round the shoulders of the craftsman, the poor stumbling working man. What would that man be if he were only given the freedom to use his imagination? Ruskin wrote:

Men were not intended to work with the accuracy of tools, to be precise and perfect in all their actions. If you will have that precision out of them, and make their fingers measure degrees like cog-wheels, and their arms strike curves like compasses, you must unhumanize them. All the energy of their spirits must be given to make cogs and compasses of themselves. All their attention and strength must go to the accomplishment of the mean act. The eye of the soul must be bent upon the finger-point, and the soul's force must fill all the visible nerves that guide it, ten hours a day, that it may not err from its steely precision, and so soul and sight be worn away, and the whole human being be lost at last – a heap of sawdust, so far as its intellectual work in this world is concerned: saved only by its Heart, which cannot go into the form of cogs and compasses, but expands, after the ten hours are over, into fireside humanity. On the other hand, if you will make a man of the working creature, you cannot make a tool. Let him but begin to imagine, to think, to try to do anything worth doing; and the engine-turned precision will be lost at once. Out come all his roughness, all his dulness, all his incapability; shame

upon shame, failure upon failure, pause after pause: but out comes the whole majesty of him also; and we know the height of it only when we see the clouds settling upon him. And whether the clouds be bright or dark, there will be transfiguration behind and within them.<sup>9</sup>

In Ruskin's words the whole range of the decorative arts, the experience of ordinary life and of making – all these things are set on fire, lit up, given meaning by the creativity which is in all of us.

I have made the obvious point that two of the most powerful sources of inspiration for the Romantics on the one hand and the Arts and Crafts movement on the other were nature and the past. But now I go beyond that to say that both nature and the past are avenues of cultural escape, ways of countering the narrowness of modernity: nature is an escape from the city, the past is an escape from now. This escapism is the same in the big Romantic movement and in the small Arts and Crafts: both were an emotional and creative response to the modernisation of the world which took place in Britain in the nineteenth century, the industrialisation of work and the urbanisation of daily life. The Arts and Crafts movement was in that sense anti-modern.

And we should not be ashamed to say that. We should not be glib and hug our progressive selves. The experience of modernisation is massive, profound and fearful, and all the Arts and Crafts sketching and loveliness, all that seeking out of old ways of making, all those dreams of cottages and sheepfolds and the quiet of England in the olden time – they are all down to fear, a fear that we do wrong to deny. The anti-modern mood of the Arts and Crafts was appropriate, necessary, not to be avoided without loss to the spirit.



## Notes

1. Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, Minutes 25 May 1887. (Archive of Art and Design, Victoria & Albert Museum).
2. The phrase seems to have been current by 1899. In August-September, C. R. Ashbee wrote in his journal, 'An interesting Hungarian has turned up – see how catholic is the modern Arts and Crafts movement...' (Ashbee Journals, King's College Library, Cambridge) And on 2 November 1899 Walter Crane gave a lecture entitled 'The Arts and Crafts movement: Its general tendency and possible outcome'. (Arts and Crafts Exhibition, Catalogue of the sixth exhibition...1899).
3. In 1911 the *Architectural Review*, once closely associated with the movement, referred mistakenly to the 'Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, now dead.' See *Architectural Review* 30 (1911), p. 285.
4. D. S. MacColl in *Architectural Review* 13 (1903), p. 188
5. Walter Crane, *William Morris to Whistler* (1911), pp. 54-5.
6. Henry Wilson, *Silverwork and Jewellery* (London 1903), p. 127.
7. Payne family papers.
8. *Pioneers of the Modern Movement: From William Morris to Walter Gropius* (London: Faber and Faber 1936), pp. 157-8.
9. Clive Wilmer (ed.), *Unto This Last and Other Writings by John Ruskin* (London: Penguin Books, 1997), pp. 84-5

# Victorian Transfer-printed Ceramics

IAN COX

DIRECTOR, VICTORIAN SOCIETY IN AMERICA LONDON SUMMER SCHOOL

A short time ago I wandered in to a charity shop in west London to discover on the bric-a-brac shelves at the back of the store five mid-nineteenth century blue and white transfer-printed soup plates. A couple of them had minor chips but the price was just ten pounds – a reminder that this kind of antique ceramic ware was not only made in vast quantities during the Victorian period (in Britain and elsewhere) so a lot has survived, but that it is also currently out of fashion. It prompted me to think of my collection of these sorts of items at home and to make the decision to write a brief article about them for this special edition of *Nineteenth Century*, exploring both the gradual evolution of the technique of transfer printing and the fascinating range of subject matter represented on ceramic surfaces decorated in this way during the Victorian period.

Transfer printing as a decorative technique was not a nineteenth-century technology, as it originated in the middle of the eighteenth century when entrepreneurial potters were looking to develop methods of decoration for the mass production of ceramic wares which did not employ labour-intensive and thus expensive hand painting. Essentially it involved engraving a design onto a copper plate, applying a coating of ink to the plate, wiping off the excess ink leaving only what remained in the grooves, and then applying tissue paper to the surface of the plate to soak up ink from the engraved grooves; in the process the inked design from the grooves would be transferred to the paper. When the inked paper had been carefully peeled off the copper plate and dried it could then be pressed on to a moistened unglazed ceramic surface, to which the ink with the pattern acquired from the engraved copper plate would adhere. The transfer-inked ceramic was then fired at a low temperature and the paper would burn away, leaving only the ink design; the heat would fix the pattern permanently to the ceramic piece.

The transfer-printing process allowed ceramic items to be decorated in a single colour cheaply and effectively to a consistent standard. The Worcester factory were using the

method of decoration in the 1750's, and later in the century Josiah Wedgwood's firm at Etruria near Stoke-on-Trent used the technique extensively. It was in the nineteenth century however, that the method was widely used by many Staffordshire factory-based potters such as Minton, Spode and others to produce thousands and thousands of ceramic items for both domestic and overseas markets.

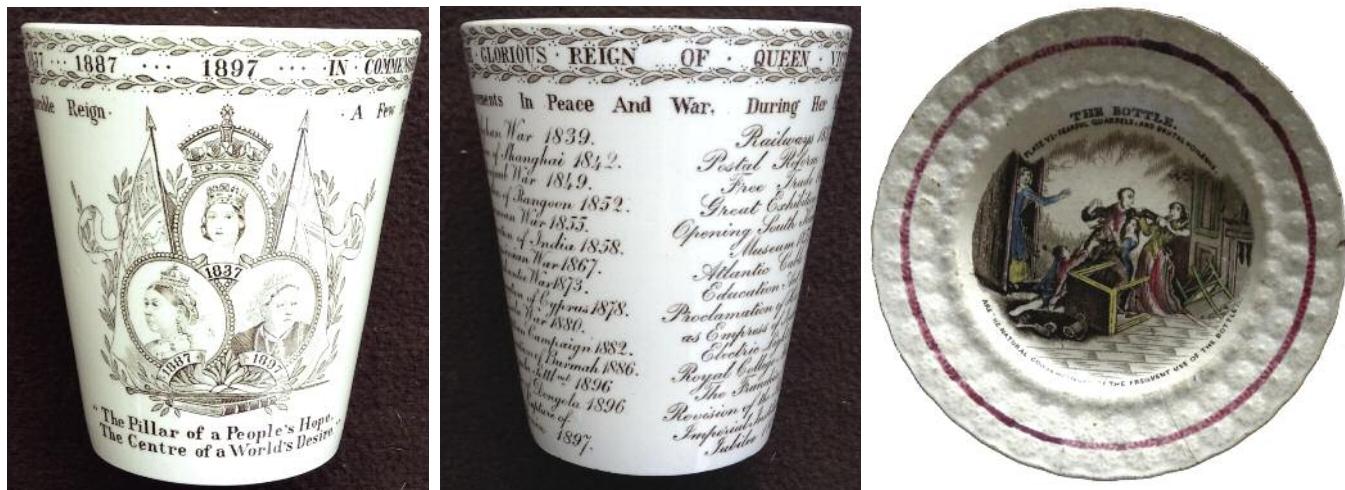
Blue-and-white ware had been popular ever since oriental porcelains first came in to Europe in some quantity in the seventeenth century, and it never totally went out of fashion. Though the aesthetics of decoration changed, the universal attraction of blue-on-white appealed to Victorian tastes much as it had done to the Georgians in the eighteenth century. The dish shown next is very similar to the ones in the charity shop. Measuring ten inches across it probably came from a large dinner service and was for serving soup. It has a transfer-printed illustration in the centre of the bowl which is an eclectic confection of chinoiserie and rococo elements which together form an imaginary 'fantastical' landscape and it has a similarly designed border. Marks on the back of the dish indicate it was manufactured by Minton of Stoke and probably made in about 1860. An entire service of meat platters, tureens of various kinds, gravy boats and dozens of various kinds of plates would

have been an impressive sight in any middle-class Victorian dining room and something of a status symbol for the owners.

The design possibilities for transfer-printed wares were endless and easily manipulated on the potters' deliberately limited number of 'shapes' – the most complex and thus



(L to R): Ellen L. Clacy (1870-1916), *The China Closet, Knole*. Watercolor, 1880. Victoria & Albert Museum, London. Blue-and-white transfer-printed soup bowl, Minton, c. 1860. Author's collection.



Minton Queen Victoria Diamond Jubilee beaker, 1897. Transfer-printed and clobbered plate entitled "The Bottle", c. 1860. Author's collection.

expensive part of the production process. The customer would thus have been able to choose from hundreds of different designs and exercise an element of 'discernment' when purchasing an imposing and important dining room set. Though the decorative technique was limited to only one colour way at a time per item this did not deter production of ceramic pieces, and the technique was used not only on dinner services and tea sets but also for a wide variety of decorative wares. It truly brought attractively decorated ceramics to a wide range of consumers both in Britain and in all parts of the British Empire, as well as in America.

I am especially fond of the commemorative beaker shown which I purchased in an antique shop in Yorkshire about twenty years ago. This is a transfer-printed mass-produced but good quality object of its type produced as a souvenir to celebrate Queen Victoria's sixty-year reign, celebrated on June 22, 1897. It was made by the Staffordshire firm of Minton's and retailed through Mortlakes of Oxford Street in London. All of the elaborate decoration is in sepia tint and to the front are three portrait heads in ovals of the Queen at three different dates: the accession in 1837, the golden jubilee year of 1887 and in 1897. Below is the inscription 'The Pillar of a People's Hope, The Centre of a World's Desire'—hardly a sentiment which would be deemed appropriate for a piece of royal commemorative ware today!

Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee enjoyed a huge sense of occasion and involved many events, perhaps the most important one taking place when she travelled in a carriage from Buckingham Palace to St Paul's Cathedral for a thanksgiving service on that June day. As a frail old lady she was not able to mount the steps of the cathedral so remained in her carriage whilst the service was held in the open air. Compared with the 1887 Golden Jubilee when 'family' was the dominant theme, the Diamond Jubilee stressed the theme of 'Empire' – a subject promoted by politician and imperialist Joseph Chamberlain, then Secretary of State for the Colonies. The Queen, presented in a maternal light, sent a telegram to the Empire reading, 'From my heart I thank my beloved people. May God bless them.' The theme of achievement in peace, war and Empire is reflected in the decoration on the back of this beaker. Here two lists name significant events which took place during Victoria's reign ranging from the invention of electric light in 1878 and the

opening of the South Kensington Museum (now the Victoria and Albert Museum) in 1857 to the Zulu War in 1880 and the proclamation of Her Majesty as Empress of India in 1876.

My third item is an intriguing small plate, one of a set of eight and one of two I inherited from my maternal grandmother back in the 1970's. It is made from earthenware and has a transfer-printed central well with a moulded miniature flower-head border decorated with a single pink line. It is interesting for two reasons—its subject matter and the method of decoration used in its production. The interior scene is one which explored the sensitive topic of domestic violence; a husband assaults his wife amidst overturned furniture as two children attempt to prevent further escalation of the event. An inscription reads, 'THE BOTTLE – Plate VI – FEARFUL QUARRELS AND BRUTAL VIOLENCE ARE THE NATURAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE FREQUENT USE OF THE BOTTLE'. In mid-nineteenth century Britain the abuse of alcohol was a huge problem and it attracted much comment and criticism in the press. The image is one from a set of eight paintings (later turned in to engravings) produced in 1847 by the famous nineteenth-century satirist George Cruikshank, who had been a heavy drinker at one point of his life. In the late 1840's he became obsessed with the temperance movement and supplied works to both the Temperance Society and the Total Abstinence Society; he became Vice President of the National Temperance League in 1856. A sequel, 'The Drunkard's Children', was produced in 1848. Produced as a narratively based set, almost like a comic strip and reminiscent of the paintings of Augustus Egg, they tell a story which encourages the viewer to follow it through to the consequences revealed in the last item. To what extent these narratives overloaded with the simple moral message of "abstinence at all costs" had any effect of the drinking habits of the populace is a mystery, but this plate is a fascinating survival of what I suppose many would call an early form of health education.

On a second level the plate is also interesting because in contrast to the first two examples here it appears coloured and indeed it is. Producing coloured decoration on mass produced wares at an economic cost was an important goal for potters in the early Victorian period but how did they go

about it? The method involved producing the main, detailed decoration from a single coloured tissue print based on an engraving put down under the glaze. When this had been done and the pot had been fired it then passed to the decorating shop, where operatives would splash on blobs of colour (in this case, blue, pink and green) on top of the glaze to produce appropriate coloured effects. The technique was dubbed “print and tint” and it worked reasonably well, despite its crudity, until better methods were developed. The derogative name for this technique of cheap decoration was “clobbering” and it sums up the process very well, but at the cheaper end of the market it appears to have been popular with the purchasing public for many decades.

My fourth item is a pot lid and base which I've had for about twenty years. I bought it in an antique shop in Kilbarchan just outside Glasgow and I remember thinking I had paid too much for it at the time. These items were originally used in the retailing of food, toiletries like toothpaste and the like. What's immediately striking about this example is that it is coloured, but in a much more sophisticated way than in the previous example, so it is useful to explore this aspect in the pot lid first. As I mentioned earlier, the challenge for mid-nineteenth century potters making mass-produced items was to invent a method of producing coloured decoration which would yield convincing, high standard results over and over again. The answer lay in developing ways of extending the possibilities of the existing technique. Whilst they may not have invented the technique, the firm associated with the manufacture of pot lids with multi-coloured decoration in the middle of the nineteenth century is that of F and R Pratt and Company of Fenton, which had been founded in the Regency period in 1818. The new technique involved developing, for a single design perhaps adapted from a painting by a well-known Victorian artist, a series of transfers for the different colour ways which would make up the final design. These would be laid down separately one on top of the other and then fired on to the pot to produce the finished result – a multi-coloured reproduction of an original work. Accuracy of placement was the key to success and skilled workers were needed to carry out the task of placing the transfers. The borders of most pot lids contain a series of miniature circles which collectively appear like beads on a necklace, and if

one looks carefully there is usually one which is larger than all the others; this is the one used by the decorator to place the transfers accurately one on top of the other. On this example there is a complex scrolled border but no such mark is visible so it must have been completed by an expert decorator. Over a forty-year period the company produced 550 different designs for pot lids and many of the designs were adapted to go on to other types of product produced by the firm as well. Subjects ranged from natural history topics such as species of British birds, to reproductions of the work of famous artists like Edwin Landseer, to popular views, and many were made as souvenir items. This pot lid, larger than many, shows an interior view of the Great Exhibition held in the Paxton-designed Crystal Palace between May and September 1851. The brainchild of Prince Albert and Henry Cole, this international exhibition, with almost 14,000 exhibitors, was held in an innovative iron and glass prefabricated building dubbed a ‘wonder of the modern age’. It showcased manufactured products from round the world and was a huge success in terms of attendees and profits. Over six million people from all walks of life visited the Hyde Park site during the six months the Great Exhibition was open, and the profits of £186,000 were used in part to finance the setting up of the South Kensington Museum. This pot lid shows a view of the length of the main building with galleries on both sides and a viewing public looking at sculpture and showpiece exhibits like the impressive central water fountain. It would have made someone a perfect souvenir of a visit to probably the largest and most impressive exhibition ever to have been held up to that point in time, and I consider it a rarity in my collection today.

The four objects I have discussed tell a fascinating story of technical innovation and decorative endeavour when the Staffordshire ceramics industry was at a peak in the Victorian period. It would be many years before the new technique of lithographic printing would overtake and effectively suppress what had become one of the most highly successful and profitable ways of developing appealing ceramic products for a competitive consumer-driven market place both at home and abroad.



## The Bibliophilist

### *Edwardian Opulence, British Art at the Dawn of the Twentieth Century*

Edited by Angus Trumble and Andrea Wolk Rager

With contributions by A. Cassandra Albinson, Tim Barringer, Pamela Fletcher, Imogen Hart, Elizabeth C. Mansfield, Alexander Nemarov, Andrea Wolk Rager, and Angus Trumble.

New Haven and London: Yale Center for British Art and Yale University Press, 2013.

The ongoing fascination with – and nostalgia for – the Edwardian period in England on both sides of the Atlantic has led to a stream of books in the hundred or so years since the death of Edward VII.

For an era that lasted less than ten years, just 1901 to 1910 (named for the brief time during which “the good king” reigned) there have been a disproportionate number of attempts to recapture its

glamour, style, and meaning through fiction and non-fiction in many media.

These efforts began scarcely twenty years after Edward's death in 1910 with publication of *The Edwardians* (1930) by Vita Sackville-West. Film and television followed with the *Upstairs/Downstairs* series aired by Masterpiece Theater beginning in 1971. Now we have *Downton Abbey*, a series in its 5<sup>th</sup> season, and believed to reach a global audience of over 120 million households. Public appetite for the latter seems to know no bounds, extending even to the costumes made for the series, which is currently the subject of an exhibition held at Winterthur Museum, the first time this author can recall when Winterthur, a highly-regarded museum, school, and garden that focuses on American material culture, has examined a fictional interpretation of history—and English history, no less. But I digress.

*Edwardian Opulence, British Art at the Dawn of the Twentieth Century* offers a broad scholarly survey of the period in eight essays, six of which revolve around thematic subjects in painting and photography, augmented by one on costume and another, interiors. A lush, beautifully illustrated and produced volume, it accompanied an exhibition by the same name that was mounted by the Yale Center for British Art in 2013.

According to the director's foreword, the exhibition and this volume that documents it, have been in process for nearly ten years. *Edwardian Opulence* (the catalog) is a companion volume to *The Edwardian Sense: Art, Design, and Performance in Britain, 1900-1910*, the twentieth volume in the museum's *Studies in British Art* (2010), to which many of the current authors also contributed. This information came as a surprise: there were very few mentions to the previous volume despite the fact that similar topics are covered. One wishes to know what led to the choices of essays in this volume over the first, and whether some essays grew out of previous research, and most of all, the connection the two books share. The director stated that *Edwardian Sense* "was conceived as a companion to the present volume, just as our aim was for *Edwardian Opulence* to complement *The Edwardian Sense*." For the reader and researcher, it is an opportunity lost.

The exhibition features objects of conspicuous consumption and paintings that extravagantly convey the beauty of this lost world. For its part, the catalogue provides a counterbalance to this opulence with well-written catalogue entries and essays that explore the tensions and aspirations they embody. While the essays loosely move from imperial to rural subjects, the catalogue entries are grouped under eleven subjects that begin with "imperial splendor" and "the great world" to "town" and "country" before moving on to some more probing encounters with "history, myth, pageant" and a memorable final section entitled "war, sleep, and death." A high proportion of the objects in the catalogue are paintings, sculptures, photographs and prints, with only a few jeweled ornaments and costumes, and other decorative arts. There are 115 catalogue entries, but one reviewer counted 170 objects in the exhibition. A complete checklist would have enhanced the catalogue and helped to create a fuller impression of the exhibition that this book is intended to document.

Angus Trumble opens the volume with a fine overview that sets up the theme of contradictions or "binaries" embedded in the very fiber of Edwardian Britain and explored throughout this volume, cast in terms such as languor vs. speed, rural vs. urban, nation vs. empire, conservative vs. progressive. He describes an oscillating ambivalence mired anxiously between the country's past and its future, looking backward with nostalgia while embracing the new with excitement and more than a little trepidation. Setting aside the old chestnut of the Edwardian era as one long garden party conducted in elegant clothes, Trumble introduces a pervasive uneasiness that grows with changes in English society – the rise of trade unions, the suffrage movement, and the massive shift of the

English population to metropolitan centers with its concomitant ills, including grinding poverty – that heralded a shift away from the aristocratic and wealthy one per-cent toward a more democratic society. Meanwhile, alliances on the global stage led to a world war that would blast their sheltered, leisured lives to smithereens. It would have been helpful to receive additional historical background – especially in view of the museum's American audience, or a historical essay that laid the groundwork in more detail. However, Trumble's essay entitled "The Soldier, the King, and the Proconsul: an Edwardian Processional," helps to fill out the meaning of "Edwardian" against the backdrop of British aristocracy and upper class public servants.

The "imperial splendor" portion of the catalogue entries are well-represented in the essay by co-editor Andrea Wolk Rager, who introduces the concept of "spectacle, luxury, and desire in the Edwardian age" with a close examination of the gowns and jeweled ornaments worn in India by the American-born Mary Lieter, who in a typical "dollar princess" match of money and aristocratic titles, married George Curzon, 1<sup>st</sup> Marquess Curzon of Kedleston thereby injecting much-needed cash into the Curzon family finances. When her husband was made the viceroy of India in 1898, Mary became Lady Curzon, Vicereine of India. Grasping the importance of her role as an American-born symbol of empire, she chose her public gowns carefully for their political and social significance. Her *Maison Worth* gown, embellished by Indian embroiderers using silver and gold thread, communicated a "triumph of ceremonial and material opulence that was truly global in scope." Similarly, Elizabeth C. Mansfield's essay makes an excellent case that the popularity of the "Louis styles" among Edwardians was symptomatic of their nostalgia for the privileged life of the French aristocracy, an *ancien régime* that paralleled the brilliance of their own.

History painting, portraiture, and photography are the subject of several essays. In addition to Trumble's aforementioned essay, A. Cassandra Albinson brings a fresh eye to Edwardian portraiture with a well-argued essay on the symbiotic relationship between photography and fashion, noting that monochromatic, often boldly striped costumes were favored for their distinctive look in black and white images. Pamela Fletcher offers evidence of the Royal Academy's attempts to introduce "certain elements of the avant-garde" including Tonalism and the nude. Imogen Hart investigates the use of spectacle, audience participation and social commentary in history paintings. Lastly Tim Barringer evokes nostalgia for a rural world similar in its medieval simplicity and sturdiness to that described by William Morris in *News from Nowhere*. Barringer describes Robert Ashbee's failed experimental Guild of Handicraft in Chipping Camden, paintings by Rex Vicat Cole, and in music by Edward Elgar amidst a rapidly retreating landscape, soon lost to construction and mechanization. Alexander Nemerov's essay on the photographer Frederick H. Evans's "A Sea of Steps" is a tightly-executed meditation on emptiness at the heart of an aesthetic image.

At the end of it all lies war, and an end to the glittering spectacle. The last two paintings in the catalogue entries bear special witness: *Clio and the Children* (1913 and 1915) by Charles Sims, and William Orpen's *To the Unknown British Soldier in France* (1921 and 1928). In Sims's idyllic British landscape, with its bucolic scene of high summer, children are scattered on the grass. They are listening to Clio, the muse of history, who reads from a scroll that is implied to be a history of Britain. With the death of his son in 1914, Sims returned to the canvas, altering its secure, pastoral scene by blotting out the scroll's text with red paint in bloody recognition of war's horrible cost. The cool and elegant setting of Versailles is the site of Orpen's *To the Unknown British Soldier in France*. Tasked with painting the proceedings leading to the Treaty of Versailles, Orpen grew disillusioned as the

distinguished peacemakers engaged in a prolonged and cynical carving up of conquered territories. In the light of the immeasurable sacrifices made by soldiers on all sides, Orpen departed from his commission and painted this stark coffin, covered in the Union Jack and a simple soldier's helmet. It proclaimed the dawning of a new era in which Britain's self-

congratulatory age of chivalry, so handsomely presented in Edwardian history paintings, was over. Nothing would be the same again.

Reviewed by Jeannine Falino

## *Whistler: A Life for Art's Sake*

Daniel E. Sutherland. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014.

This is the first comprehensive Whistler biography published in almost two decades. Daniel E. Sutherland, a seasoned historian and distinguished professor at the University of Arkansas, was aided by the extensive resources of the Centre for Whistler Studies at the University of Glasgow and its online, well-indexed, and searchable edition of Whistler's letters, edited by Margaret F. MacDonald, Patricia de Montfort, and Nigel Thorp which became available only in the early twenty-first century. Sutherland has written a series of books chronicling nineteenth-century America and has therefore been able to contextualize the historical geography and mercurial life of this most cosmopolitan artist.

The biography is thorough and densely footnoted but highly readable and should be of interest to both scholars and general audiences. Sutherland identifies each of the major characters: the artist's family members, friends in the art world, models, romantic liaisons, business associates, etc., and clearly made detailed use of the 10,000 pieces of correspondence now assembled online (at <http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence/>) and, as the author notes in his acknowledgments, "visited thirty libraries and archives in consulting the 200 manuscript collections and 2,000 books, catalogues, dissertation, articles, essays, newspapers, and pamphlets" related to Whistler's life. Sutherland's characters come convincingly to non-fictional life through his use of these sources, and he has gathered and presented the evidence of Whistler's complicated relationships with both males and females. While preparing a late-in-life dissertation about Whistler's painting techniques and his friendships, from 1998 to 1994, I was immersed in the Whistler literature and would have especially appreciated this detailed biography at that time (although I am sorry that the style of footnotes does not allow for the identification of the sources for each particular statement within a paragraph).

Sutherland describes the background, subjects, and situations related to Whistler's paintings, etchings, lithographs, and pastels, but this is not an art-historical book. It should be read with some of the excellent illustrated catalogues by Margaret MacDonald, Linda Merrill, David Curry, and others close at hand.

With new analysis and contextual elaborations, Sutherland sheds new light on the well-known chronological details of Whistler's life. James Abbott Whistler, born in Lowell, MA in 1834, lived in "three countries and nine homes before the age of seventeen, and that was one of the more settled periods of his life." His father, George Washington Whistler, graduated from West Point, liked art and music, and became a railroad engineer, moving the family around the US and then to Russia for six years. George's wife, Anna McNeill Whistler, a devout Episcopalian, managed religious instruction and family prayers. Typical of the era, issues of poor health are a continuing theme; Anna had five children, but only the first two, "Jemie" and "Willie," survived to adulthood. Their father died of congestive heart failure in Russia at the age of only forty-eight. Jemie, interested in art from an early age, had studied drawing in Russia, attended lectures by Charles Robert Leslie at the Royal Academy, was tutored by his brother-in-law Seymour Haden (who was married to his step-sister), and received

formal instruction in drawing, mapmaking, and surveying at West Point, including tutelage under Robert Weir. Due to reckless behavior, excessive demerits, and failing a final chemistry examination, Whistler was expelled from West Point. Sutherland dutifully reports famous Whistler quips throughout the book, including the artist's amusing and airy explanation of his aborted military career: had silicon been a gas, he would have been a major general.

We follow Whistler's peripatetic career back and forth from Paris to London, his study with Gleyre who believed that ivory black was the queen of colors; Whistler later called it the "universal harmonizer." Sutherland provides descriptions of the artist's camaraderie with his French and English friends in the 1860s including George du Maurier, Edward Poynter, Ernst Delannoy, Edgar Degas, Gustave Courbet, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Algernon Swinburne and other Pre-Raphaelites. Whistler formed a named fraternal alliance: the "Societe des Trois" with Henri Fantin-Latour and Alphonse Legros; after quarrels, Legros was replaced with Albert Moore. Much of the text chronicles Whistler's behavior, which alternated between quarreling and fist-fights and acts of generosity, including helping his French artist friends to sell their paintings in England. To my knowledge, Sutherland has made a unique contribution to Whistler studies by offering the most logical explanation for his mysterious trip to Chile in 1866: the artist became involved with money-making schemes with ex-Confederates to assist Chile and Peru in their war against Spain, and became something of a secret agent, keeping track of diplomatic negotiations in Chile (while producing at least six paintings in Valparaiso).

The decades of Whistler's life can be defined by his friends or by his women. His Bohemian existence in Paris featured grisettes who posed for etchings or tore up his work. His companion and model for most of the 1860s was Joanna Hiffernan, at first a seventeen-year-old model who later traveled with him to France – but could not join him in society drawing rooms and had to move out when his mother came to live with him in London. With Louisa Hanson, parlor maid, he had a son, Charlie, whom he called his "infidelity to Jo." Maud Franklin was his mistress and model for the 1870s and the first part of the 1880s, cooking and caring for him in London and later in Venice where he had a new group of artist friends. Maud bore him two children, but was summarily supplanted when the artist married Beatrice Godwin, the widow of his 1870s friend E. W. Godwin, in 1888. (A legend tells that Whistler, Beatrice and Lady Archibald Campbell had enjoyed a picnic lunch on Godwin's coffin in 1886.) Sutherland notes that both Jo and Maud posed nude for other artists, and the subsequent effect that would have had on their tenure. Whistler was a loyal and caring husband to Beatrice, whom he called "Trixie." They painted young female models side by side, had a coded baby-talk language, and were both deeply attached to Whistler's patron Charles L. Freer in the 1890s. After Trixie died in 1896 Whistler became a sad, ill, and lonely man and wrote heartbreaking letters to Freer including a touching passage about the exotic songbird

Freer had given to Beatrice and that its song contained “the spirit of my beautiful Lady...and the song was *her* song of love—and courage—and...so was her farewell.” The artist died in 1903, the day after taking a carriage ride with Freer. Sutherland reports that both Maud and Jo visited to pay their respects.

Whistler lived several interwoven lives and seemed to have multiple personae; any biographer faces a surfeit of information and challenges on how to organize the mounds of material into a single book. The artist shuttled between Paris and London and had famous friends in both cities; met Baudelaire and was a close friend to Mallarmé; collected *japonisme*, produced etchings, pastels, paintings, lithographs, and the entire painted Peacock Room for the Leylands (and had complicated relationships with that family); posed as a witty society dilettante while working fiercely at his craft and at promoting his work and reputation, all the while battling friends and critics publicly, including a famous

lawsuit accusing John Ruskin of libel. Other authors have avoided this challenge by producing books on only one major aspect: e.g. Linda Merrill on the Ruskin trial (*A Pot of Paint: Aesthetics on Trial in Whistler v. Ruskin*, 1993) and the Peacock Room (*The Peacock Room: A Cultural Biography*, 1998); Grischka Petri wrote on his business career: *Arrangement in Business: The Art Markets & the Career of James McNeill Whistler*, 2011, and Margaret MacDonald, who has studied Whistler intensely since 1968, has produced numerous catalogues on his artwork, including paintings in Venice and of the Thames, in addition to catalogues of drawings, pastels, and watercolors; graphic works, and even books on his mother and his mother's recipes. Sutherland's thorough biography is a worthy addition to the highly-populated world of published Whistler studies.

*Reviewed by Joyce Hill Stoner*

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## *The Pinecone: The Story of Sarah Losh, Forgotten Romantic Heroine—Antiquarian, Architect, and Visionary*

Jenny Uglow. London: Faber and Faber Limited, 2012.  
American edition: New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013.

Sarah Losh was a young woman of extensive private means, possessed of an excellent education and a keen mind. In 1842, in her hometown of Wreay, in Cumbria, England, she designed and built the remarkable Saint Mary's Church ([www.stmaryswreay.org/](http://www.stmaryswreay.org/)). What were her motives, her interests, and her feelings regarding this church? We cannot be certain, as few of her writings survive and they do not reveal much. This book, *The Pinecone: The Story of Sarah Losh, Forgotten Romantic Heroine—Antiquarian, Architect, and Visionary* by Jenny Uglow, is a well-researched and scholarly attempt to discover answers to those questions.

Sarah left a mystery worthy of her contemporaries in English arts and letters—some mention the Brontës—who also created mysteries, Gothic and otherwise, for the amusement and edification of their audiences. She left a multitude of clues within the structure: her love of and expertise in mathematics; her travels in Europe; her interest in archaeology; and her affection for her native county. In her studies of ancient churches and cathedrals in Europe, she may have noted the sacred geometry within the buildings—the use of specific numbers and sets of numbers translated into measurement, this measurement then having a connection and communication with the Divine by means of number and pattern. Indeed, she left behind more questions than answers. Like the artist that she surely was, she leaves it to the observer of her work to find personal meaning, to translate the message.

The book is divided into three sections: Daughter, Sister, and Maker. Each section describes influences and individuals who contributed to Sarah's development as a woman and a scholar. The sections also detail, at great length, English history and geography, along with contemporary intellectual developments and religious and philosophical questions of the era. As a woman gifted with intelligence, money, and power as a long respected resident of her community, Sara was able to fully explore all that interested her: architecture; religion; politics; ancient history; and archaeology.

When great sorrow eventually visited her life in the death of her beloved sister Katherine, Sarah transformed herself from a traveler and gifted amateur into a builder -- someone who created monuments in the real world that expressed her loss. She was able to make a statement in stone that embodied her deepest

convictions and determination to embrace life, not lose herself in grief. Even so, it was said that she never fully recovered from the loss of her sister. An artist of the 20th century, Frida Kahlo, also expressed her loss of health and her personal tragedy in a series of self-portraits. Could the construction of her church have had the same healing effect for Sarah? To make a concrete object, separate from one's self, helps to objectify the loss and send it out of one's heart.

The pinecone, a recurring decorative motif within her church, reveals quite a bit. Its spirals in the form of double helixes represent not just the Golden Mean (an ancient mathematical ratio defining a perfect aesthetic proportion) but also, as a seed carrier, regeneration, and even DNA, the means of regeneration (which Losh, of course, could not have known). The pinecone also represented the memory of the friend who had sent it, and was now dead. A tree was planted on the site from a seed of that pinecone and is now gone. But the pinecone itself proved a worthy symbol for all that she wanted to say. This childhood friend, William Thain, joined the army and was stationed in Afghanistan. He sent her a pinecone from his camp at Khelat, and was shortly thereafter killed by a single arrow. Arrows decorate the church throughout. There are arrows in the front door serving as grilles, there are arrows fencing the well at the western corner of the church (another nod to paganism—the ancient practice of founding a church upon a spring. This still continues today. The Cathedral of St. John the Divine in Upper Manhattan, is built upon a spring, as is St. Patrick's Cathedral on Fifth Avenue). And, there is a single arrow embedded in the wall of the interior of the church and silently extending from it.

Again, this reviewer wonders about the symbolism intended by Sarah. The most obvious meaning is that of a memorial to the death of her friend, typically sentimental in the Victorian manner. In the Bible, however, arrows represent spiritual truth. Isaiah 49:2-3 states, “And He has made My mouth like a sharp sword. In the shadow of His hand He has concealed Me, and He has also made Me a polished arrow; He has hidden Me in his quiver. And He said to Me, “You are My servant Israel; In Whom I will show my glory.” The arrow was a fitting choice made by Sarah, not only for its spiritual dimensions, but also as a symbol of war, and of the virgin goddess Artemis, patroness of single women. An arrow also





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represents forces moving forward, never backward, which is a most fitting statement of the timelessness of the church design. As a church, St. Mary's of Wreay is a classic design, calling on Roman and Byzantine precedents. One can say that it wasn't in style then, and it is not in style now, but it will never be out of style.

Sarah also had fun with her church, and took its design into some uncharted territory, as is the prerogative of any great artist. The exterior of the church features outsize carvings of mystical beasts: winged gaping turtles and massive open-mouthed serpents. They do not serve as rainspouts, as one would assume, but as vents for the boilers below. What a sight for a weary traveler! To see a sacred building belching smoke and sparks! Is it the wrath of the Almighty, or just a fancy carnival toy?

As an extensive exploration of these issues and much more, Jenny Uglow's book is a worthwhile read for anyone interested in the creation of a great work of art and architecture.

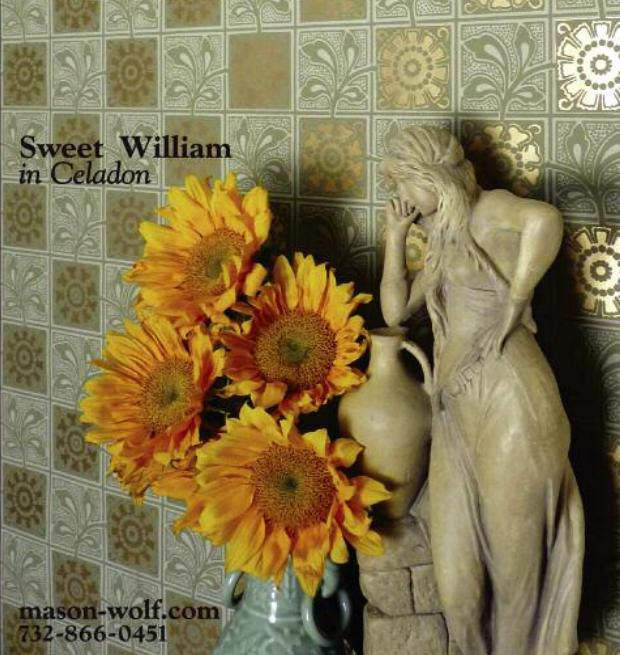
*Reviewed by Gina Santucci*





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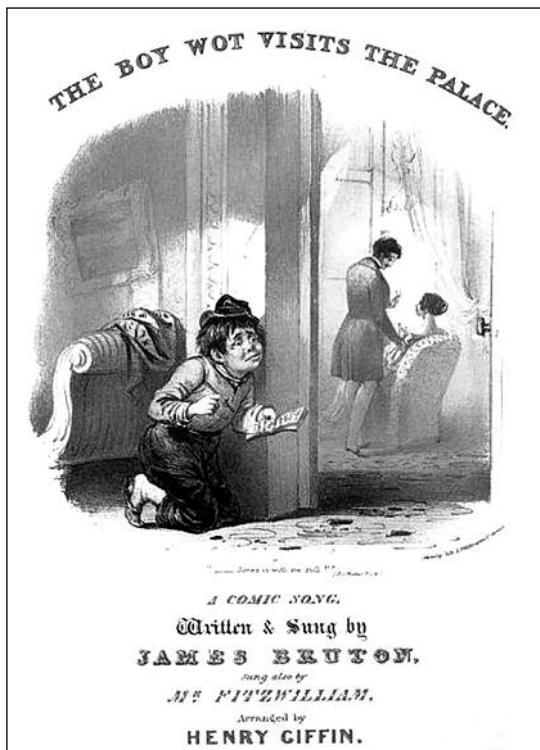
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# Milestones

## *He Stole the Queen's Knickers*

ANNE-TAYLOR CAHILL

On a deeply quiet morning in Buckingham Palace – 5:00 a.m., December 14, 1838 – in the Marble Hall to be exact – the Royal Porter, William Cox, was making his rounds. Suddenly out of the corner of his eye he caught a movement. Is it the Queen herself or perhaps a palace ghost? Suddenly from the shadows a small figure darted out, running for dear life. The porter chased him into the gardens where he apprehended him with the help of the police, ending at nearby St. James's Street. The intruder turned out to be a small boy. Who was this young snip who dared so boldly to enter the palace? Indeed, it was fourteen-year-old Edward Jones, described as filthy dirty and grotesquely ugly. He was soon to gain press fame as The Boy Jones.



(Top to bottom): "The Boy Wot Visits the Palace", a comic song by James Bruton, 1840. The Boy Jones, eavesdropping on Queen Victoria.

Upon being searched by the police, it was discovered that among other things young Jones had stolen the Queen's knickers! Brought to the Queen's Square Police Court, Jones's employer (an architect) testified that he had often spoken about getting into the palace. Two years later Jones climbed the Buckingham Palace Wall and entered again. This was just nine days after the Queen had given birth to Princess Victoria (November 1840); he claimed he only wanted to see the baby. The press had a field day with this and The Boy Jones's fame was assured. Not to be deterred, a few weeks later he returned again only to be discovered by the baby's nurse. He made a near escape but was found hiding under the Queen's dressing room sofa. Naturally, he was arrested. Questioned as to why he had entered the palace again, The Boy said was he wanted to record the conversations of the Queen, her family and the court so he could write a book and make his fortune. His father pleaded insanity on The Boy's behalf but to no avail; Jones was sentenced to three months in Tothill Fields Prison. When he was released, he lost little time in making it back to Buckingham Palace to enjoy a midnight snack in the Royal Apartments. Arrested again, he was put to hard labor.

In all, The Boy Jones was jailed twice for illegally entering the

palace. Jones himself claimed to have entered the place many other times including a few evenings sojourning in the Throne Room seated on the throne itself! Upon his second release from prison, an enterprising theatre owner offered him a princely sum to tell his tale on stage. Jones refused, and went right back to stalking the Queen. Arrested again he was kidnapped by the government and put on a Navy ship bound for Brazil, but he escaped and returned to England. Caught again, this time he was put on a prison ship that was not allowed to come near the shore. He was thus imprisoned for six years. Eventually he was deported to Australia where he died, in 1893, after a drunken fall from a bridge.

At the time of the first incident, Lady Sandwich is reported to have joked that The Boy must have been descended from "In-I-go" Jones, the architect. The Queen was not amused.



For further reading:

Jan Bondeson,  
*Queen Victoria's Stalker*  
(Amberley, 2012).

Joan Howard,  
*The Boy Jones* (Viking, 1943).

Lytton, Strachey,  
*Queen Victoria*  
(Harcourt, 1921).

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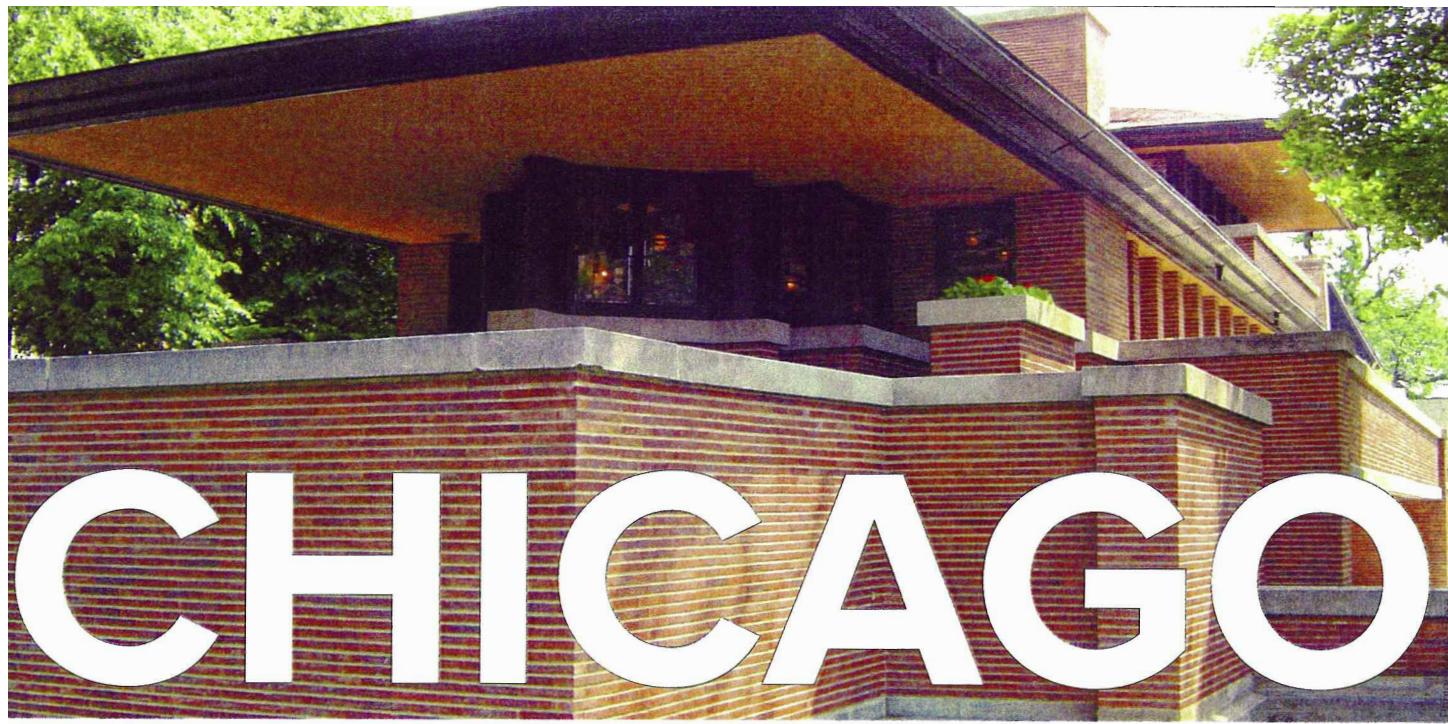
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